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The Gordon State College Writing Handbook

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Introduction

You are reading the very first edition of the Gordon State's in-house writing guide. Members of the Gordon faculty have collaborated on the authorship of this guide, and it is targeted directly at Gordon students to help them with their writing across the GSC curriculum. This guide provides at least three distinct advantages over other guides: it is specifically targeted to Gordon State students, it covers writing across the whole curriculum, not just English; and it is free.

Many approaches to crafting this guide were entertained, but the authors decided that what students really want from a composition guide are practical examples of writing that they might actually encounter in their classroom experiences at Gordon. Many guides try to do this, but this guide uses real Gordon professors and real Gordon class assignments as a starting point. This results in what we feel is a substantial improvement over other available writing guides.

This guide was created as a product of the Gordon State College Composition Consortium, which is a group of faculty members from several disciplines. English faculty were well-represented, but faculty members from other disciplines have been given a balanced voice in the process, advising the English faculty on what features of writing in their disciplines are most important to them. These other faculty members sometimes also wrote full sections.

There are many benefits in using this guide beyond the rules of punctuation and grammar. More than anything, it will provide you with the tools you need to succeed in your college writing career in all disciplines, from your first semester to your last. Perhaps most importantly to the student with limited financial resources, this guide's cost represents a substantial savings from the $90.00 composition guide that it replaces. (You're welcome.)

This guide is organized according to the Areas of your Core Curriculum. The Core divides the subjects you study by Areas, and since writing is a factor in all subjects of study, and since the purposes and features of your writing will differ from one Area to the next, organizing this guide by Area seems to make the most sense and to be the most convenient. You will also be able to navigate through this guide with a good understanding of the Core curriculum.

The authors of this guide have taken the idea of Core curriculum and have applied it to writing throughout the Gordon State College experience. Many students will first be introduced to this guide when taking those all-important two English classes—English 1101 and English 1102. But the guide can be used to assist with writing tasks in all sorts of classes—from Health Science to Mathematics, and from Sociology to Theatre Arts. Wherever there is writing at GSC (and it is just about everywhere), this guide is there to help.

-Dr. Wesley Venus
-Dr. Mark King
August, 2015

0. Why Write?

0.1 Writing everywhere

We sit in a coffee shop, hunched over our laptops, writing. As we walk across campus, we write using our thumbs and a smartphone keyboard. We arrive at our classroom, take out a notebook and write notes as the professor lectures. When he's not looking, we take out another small piece of paper and jot down a list of "things to do" for that evening. After class, an attractive classmate gives us his or her number and we "write" it in our phone's list of contacts. Pleased to have received such a valuable artifact, we write about our good fortune on social media. Writing, writing, writing. Writing is so common in our society that at first the question, "why write?" might seem pointless and take readers aback—"why write?" How could we *not* write? Haven't human beings always written? After all, isn't writing "natural"?

0.2 No writing?

It is not difficult to imagine a world *without* writing. In fact, for much of humanity's two-hundred thousand years on the planet, people did *not* write (Zolafaharifard); writing only developed around 3,000 BC in the part of the world now known as Iraq ("Why Do We?"). So that means that for more than three quarters of humanity's time on this planet, we didn't write at all. What's more, even after 3,000 BC, most of humankind were still non-writers: widespread literacy didn't happen in the West until the nineteenth century or so (Mitch). Many believe that *The Odyssey*, arguably one of the greatest achievements in the Western literary tradition, was composed by a poet who could not write (Burgess 88). Maybe humankind won't always write; maybe we're one of the last generations to do so.

We don't have to write; even today, it is possible to imagine a world with no writing. At some institutions, college examinations are still given orally: that is, a team of professors ask the student questions and the student replies on the spot –no pen or pencil required. Today, some of us prefer to leave voice mail messages rather than to send texts. Others discard the printed "How To" directions with a new gadget to search for a YouTube video explaining the same thing.

0.3 Natural?

Moreover, writing is *not* natural. Arguably, writing is decidedly *unnatural*: writing takes the jumble of our distinctively non-linear thoughts and forces those non-linear thoughts into tight linear rows of clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. There is even something mystical or dangerous about the act of writing: classical poets call upon the ancient Greek muses and ask for their blessings before venturing into the tricky world of epic poetry. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates never did get over his suspicion of writing. Socrates felt that if students could simply access knowledge that had been written, they might mistake having access to data for actual wisdom ("Why Do We?"). One can only wonder what Socrates would made of Google.

0.4. Six reasons to write

Although writing may not be *natural*, it sure is common. As mentioned earlier, it seems as if almost everyone is writing almost all the time—text messages, social media updates, essays, Yelp restaurant reviews. Certainly more people in history are writing now than ever before and they're writing more text than ever before. The question remains: why? There is not just one answer to that question as we write for a number of reasons. We write for fun, for money, to share, to think, to remember, and to show what we think.

0.4.1 Write for fun

For some, even for those who write a lot, writing is a chore. Even some professional writers claim to dislike writing. A quotation often attributed to Dorothy Parker sums it up this way: "I don't like writing. I like having written." For others, the writing experience is even worse than a chore; they might call it sheer torture. But for some lucky folks, writing is a pleasurable activity. They delight in nothing more than being able to pen a long letter to a friend in a distant city or fire off a sharply worded two-thousand word letter to the editor of their local paper. For these people, writing is a source of fun. Lucky ducks.

0.4.2 Write for money

Though the number of those who make their livings via writing novels or poems is relatively small, when we expand the list of professional writers to include advertising copywriters, journalists, bloggers, and those in corporate communications, writing forms a fairly sizable part of the modern economy. When all of those in writing-related fields are added (the copy-editors, proofreaders, teachers, editors, and publishers) writing is more than "fairly sizable;" it is significant. In fact, at least one person thought that this was the only reason to write. Samuel Johnson once said, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote but for money" (qtd. in Boswell).

0.4.3. Write to share

Diarists, mooney-eyed lovers, religious leaders, facebook posters, poets from Shakespeare all the way to 2Pac Shakur, and even those self-appointed "experts" who post in the "comments" sections of on-line articles have felt an irresistible compulsion to let others know exactly what is in their hearts. For these sharers writing is an attempt to connect with their fellow human beings.

0.4.4 Write to remember

The student jotting down a homework assignment in a day planner, the owner of a new computer writing down a password on a Post-it note, the parent painstakingly making a grocery list before heading to the store, and the aged statesman sitting down to write his memoirs are all writing to remember. Even in our increasingly digitalized age, writing is still usually the best way to remember something. Indeed, many have learned to regret saying, "I don't need to write it

down; I can remember it." Our memories are faulty and writing preserves our thoughts.

0.4.5 Write to clarify thinking

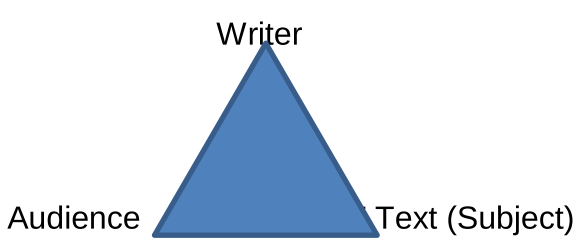
Sometimes, people don't know exactly what they feel about an issue until they take the time to write about it. It is difficult to describe, but it seems as though there is something about the way writing forces us to organize our thoughts into sentences and paragraphs helps clean up muddy thinking. Thus, writing can be said to have a didactic quality to it—it aids in **critical thinking**.

0.4.6 Write to demonstrate thinking

One of the things that writing can do is serve as a veritable "snapshot" of a person's mind. It is a unique activity that allows others to see exactly how a person thought about something. This aspect of writing is especially useful in college. If instructors had unlimited time (and classes contained very few students) they could give oral examinations. But instead, the modern college campus allows the student to explain to the professor how much (or how little) the student understands about the concept at hand. The writing may be just a phrase on an examination, or it might be a ten-page paper, but either way, the student demonstrates mastery of the subject through writing. By the way, the student who claims, "I understand the concept perfectly, I just have trouble putting it into words," usually *doesn't* understand it all that perfectly. At any rate, it is this last reason to write—to offer a "snapshot" of our thinking that will motivate much of the writing that students will do in college and be the focus for much of this book.

0.5 Three key elements in writing

Any piece of writing will have a number of elements in it, but arguably the three most important elements in any piece of writing are the writer, the audience, and the text or the subject. Writing has be *about* something (the subject). Someone has to *do* the writing (the writer). And, finally, the writing has to be *aimed* at someone (the audience). Take away any one of those elements and the writing would cease to exist. In fact, these three elements can be arranged in a triangle.

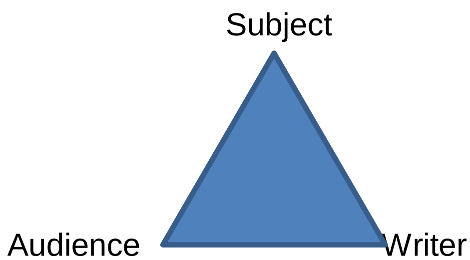


0.5.1 What is on top?

Even though every piece of writing has all three elements at work in it, the balance of attention given to each one of those elements is not always equal. It is a triangle, after all, and triangles have tops. Some forms of writing privilege the writer, some the text, and some the audience.

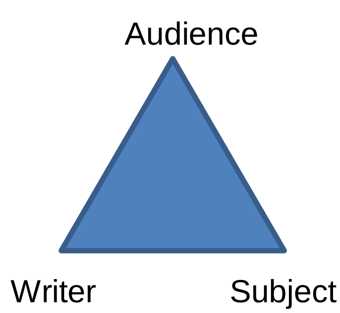
0.5.2. Writer on top

Some types of writing tend to privilege the role of the writer. That is to say, that type of writing is mostly about the person doing the writing. Some examples of this type of writing might include an autobiography, certain types of poetry—especially romantic poetry, or a diary or journal entry. More recent types of writing that privilege the role of the writer include such disparate types of writing as a love song, “Yesterday, all my troubles were so far away…” (Beatles). A facebook post, for example, is often ALL about the writer—to the detriment of everything else. Certainly it is no secret that a hefty percentage of rap music is about the writer as is the case in 2Pac’s “Me Against the World;” the “me” of the title is not some abstract, made-up character. That “me” in “Me Against the World” is 2Pac, the artist himself.



0.5.3. Subject (or text) on top

But that, “it’s all about me” approach is not the *only* way to write. A text is not always about the person speaking; sometimes it is about the subject at hand. For example, think about a textbook. The writers of a college chemistry textbook do not waste time and paper space discussing their feelings about magnesium with their readers; to do so would be silly. Their work is not personal, it is **expository**; the book will uncover (or “expose”) the secrets of chemistry to the uninitiated. Other examples of this sort of writing include encyclopedia articles, unbiased newspaper accounts, technical manuals, and cookbooks. Much, but by no means all, of the writing that students do in college will privilege the subject.



0.5.4 Audience (or reader) on top

There are also instances of writing that are focused on neither the writer nor the subject, but on the audience or reader. For example, if an inconsiderate boyfriend had to write a letter explaining his bad behavior to his girlfriend he might write something like, “There’s nothing as important as *you* are; even though I don’t always show it, *you* are the most important thing in my life.” Think about how advertisements work: what makes a good advertisement? On the simplest level, a good advertisement is simply one that successfully encourages the audience to purchase the intended product. Political communication works the same way: a Republican party television commercial is successful only to the extent that it motivates its viewership to vote for Republican candidates. In much college writing the audience is always going to be composed or partially composed of the professor. It is important to remember that when making choices as to appropriate **voice** and **diction**.

With three different ways to privilege a text (writer, subject, or audience), the student might ask, “which one is the *right* way?” The answer to that is whatever one is appropriate to the situation at hand.

It is not hard to imagine what happens when this work is done in an inappropriate manner. If you have ever read a facebook post and then thought, “Ick: too much information; who cares?” then you know what it is like to read work that is inappropriately personal. But that is not the only way to misjudge appropriateness in writing. A love note that only coldly discusses the physiological reactions associated with love, or one that outlines the history of the love poem from Petrarch to Walt Whitman would not be very effective. It is simply not appropriate in that situation to *not* talk about one’s self.

Similarly, if given the college English class assignment to trace the history of the love poem from Petrarch to Walt Whitman, it would not be appropriate for a student writer to talk about the funny feeling he gets in his chest and the way he always feels flush when a particularly attractive female classmate walks by.

0.6 Summary

Writing, although not natural, is hard to get away from; it is almost everywhere in our culture. People write for a number of reasons—to share, to remember, to make money, to have fun, and to show what is on their mind. Every piece of writing has three key elements—its writer, its subject and its intended audience. Writers should consider appropriateness when embarking on a writing project.

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Chapter 2 - Area A (Essential Skills)

This area is composed of courses that promote key foundational aptitudes that make advanced study possible. Although every engineer does not need to write like Tolstoy, he or she does need to communicate effectively in writing. Similarly, every poet does not need to understand calculus like Stephen Hawking, but he or she does need basic calculation skills. Area A serves to nurture basic skills in writing and mathematics so that the student can go on to tackle weightier matters.

2.1 The English composition sequence

The importance of writing can be attested to by the fact that English composition is the only class in the USG core curriculum that most students have to take twice. Indeed, when we speak of composition studies at Gordon State College, we usually speak of it in terms of a sequence: English 1101 and English 1102. Successful completion of both English 1101 and English 1102 (or their equivalents) is required for graduation or transfer. Usually taken in the fall of semester of the freshman year, English 1101 marks Gordon State College students' first experience with the rigors, challenges of college-level writing. In English 1101, Gordon State College Students will develop the writing skills necessary to take on the second course in the sequence, English 1102.

2.2 English 1101

Sometimes, when students think of college writing, they tend to think of students burning the midnight oil writing long, heavily foot-noted research papers on some arcane subject, or maybe crafting an impassioned persuasive paper on some current issue. English 1101, however, has little of that sort of thing. Most of the papers are short and many require little or no research. All of them ask the student writer to focus on the process of writing as well as the result or finished text

2.2.1 English 1101 and process-based writing

Briefly, process-based writing means that the student should focus on the steps of writing, not just the finished product. Of course, there are a number of ways to get to a strong finished product, but the typical writing process might contain the following steps

Reading ►Pre-Writing ► Drafting ► Revision ► Editing ► Submission

2.2.2 Types of essays and activities in English 1101

Students in English 1101 at Gordon State College will probably write around five or six essays over the course of the semester. Most will be written outside of the classroom, but some will be written wholly or in part in the classroom during class time. Some of

the types (or modes) of writing students might find themselves doing in English 1101 include:

2.2.2.1 Personal narrative

This writing assignment usually asks the student to tell a story of a key event in his or her life, relating that story with strong and specific sensory detail. Many assignments of this nature ask the writer to highlight the significance of the event and illustrate that significance in such a way that it speaks to the reader. Often, a personal narrative assignment will ask the student writer to show rather than just tell his or her feelings and/or experiences.

2.2.2.2 Compare and contrast

This assignment asks the student to examine two items, ideas, texts, products, services, etc. and explain both how they are alike and how they are dissimilar. Often, the professor will ask students to contextualize their findings in a compare and contrast essay and to make a recommendation in its conclusion.

2.2.2.3 Summary

A summary assignment asks the student writer to actively read and often annotate a text by another writer and then, using the conventions of paraphrase, quotation, and proper documentation write an essay that accurately, briefly, and thoroughly illustrates all of the original document's major points without getting bogged down into the source text's minutiae. Strong summary writers are good at seeing the "big picture."

2.2.2.4 Synthesis

When composing a synthesis essay, the student takes two or more texts, ideas, theories, etc. and combines them to form a hybrid of the two (or more) texts, ideas, or theories. A good synthesis essay connects ideas that are sometimes very different to form a coherent whole. Similar to the summary essay, the synthesis essay is a good way to develop the skill of seeing the difference between "the forest" and "the trees."

2.2.2.5 Process analysis

This assignment asks the student writer to look at a multiple-step procedure and carefully explicate each particular step giving particular attention to the details involved. A good process analysis essay is "idiot proof," that is, by following the directions carefully, any reader—regardless of the reader's prior familiarity with the process—should reach the desired result. The process analysis essay places particular value on specificity.

2.2.2.6 Description

The descriptive essay writer attempts to “paint a picture with words” and describe a particular locale so that the reader can actually “see” the place in question. Like the process analysis essay, the descriptive essay is a great way to develop the ability to write with specificity.

2.2.2.7 Problem and solution

A precursor to the argumentative or persuasive essays students write in English 1102, problem and solution essay asks the student to see a community issue, describe the issue in detail, and offer a potential solution. The process analysis essay develops a student’s ability to look beyond his or her own needs and see the values of the community at large. It also develops the ability to think in terms of possible consequences.

2.2.2.8 Classification

The goal of the classification essay is to divide a bunch of disparate items by using a principle of classification so that every item in a given group falls into one and only one category. Classification is a great way to build the skills students will use as they do work in sciences.

2.2.2.9 Definition

The definition essay asks the student writer to go beyond the dictionary definition of a term and come up with an extended and nuanced definition of a word often using examples. Often this assignment asks the student to write a definition of tricky, abstract terms such as *honesty*, *education*, or *honor.*

2.2.2.10 Persuasion/argument

Although some instructors might think of terms like “persuasion” and “argument” as very similar, others might differentiate between these two terms. Although both persuasion and argument both ask the student to create an essay that will change the opinion of one who feels diametrically opposed to the student writer on a topic, argument often relies solely on reasons and evidence. Persuasive writing tends to also incorporate emotional or value-driven reasoning.

2.2.2.11 Expository

This type of essay asks the student writer to uncover all he or she can about a given topic, package that information, and make it readable to a given audience.

2.2.2.12 Research

This mode of writing, actually more of a technique or tool, can be paired with any of the other modes of writing above. It encourages the student writer to ferret out the most trustworthy information about a subject --often using Gordon State College's Hightower Library and its holdings.

2.2.2.13 Other activities

Other activities in English 1101 include taking quizzes and tests, and writing in timed situations such as in-class essay examinations. English 1101 is also the class in which most GSC students get their first taste of college level research through the mandatory Hightower Library Orientation.

2.2.3 Types of writing, English 1101, and *The Karate Kid*

As is clear from the extensive list above, students do many different types of writing in English 1101. Sometimes the connection between assignments and what is traditionally thought of as "academic" writing is apparent—as in the case of the Problem/Solution Essay (argument) or the Classification Essay (classification work in the life sciences).

Other times, the academic connection is harder to see. A student in English 1101 might find his or herself writing an in-depth description of a dormitory room or painstakingly recalling the minute details of a family holiday celebration, or even meticulously elucidating his or her reader on the exact steps necessary to produce a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Such a student might ask, "What in the heck does this have to do with real college writing?"

Actually, it has a lot to do with college writing. To see the connection, just think about *The Karate Kid*. In the film *The Karate Kid* (1984 dir.: John G. Avildsen; remade in 2010 dir.: Harald Zwart) the protagonist visits the home of an old man who is well known as an excellent karate teacher. The young protagonist asks the old man to teach him karate and the old man agrees. However, instead of immediately learning holds, throws and kicks, the old man assigns the young man a number of mind-numbing household tasks. Moreover, the old man is very particular about the way the protagonist performs these tasks. Just as the young man has had enough of being used as inexpensive household labor, the old man makes it clear that what the protagonist has really been learning are the basics of several key karate moves. Those English 1101 writing assignments—even the ones that seem frivolous—are building core skills necessary for strong academic writing.

2.2.4 The skills developed in English 1101

There are many differences between what college writing instructors look for in English 1102 and the type of writing assignments most students received while attending high school. Although individual instructors may vary, it is probably fair to say that most college instructors are looking for increased depth and detail, more specificity, audience awareness, appropriate citation and a level of mechanical correctness in line with college audience's expectations.

2.2.4.1 Depth and detail

"Go deeper!" is an English professor's common plea. One good way to develop more depth and detail in writing is for the student writer to add the following caveat to his or her sentences: "For example…." So if a student writes, "My friend James is always making me laugh," he or she could leave it at that, or he or she could finish the thought by adding "for example" and write: "My friend James is always making me laugh. For example, one day he picked up a trash can, put it on his head, and insisted I refer to him as "R2D3" for the whole day."

2.2.4.2 Specificity

In high school, a student might get away with writing a sentence such as, "It was a nice day." In college, however, the instructor will want to know "what was nice about it?" Was it free from rain? Pleasantly cool in summer time? Warm in December? Was the day spent with friends? Alone? Or was it just a day free from hassles? Do not be surprised if the instructor scribbles something like "what do you mean by that?" in a paper's margin. Specificity is one of the key elements of college writing.

2.2.4.3 Audience awareness

Sometimes high school writers are told to write for a "general audience." However, college professors often want students to be more specific and begin to ask themselves, "who am I writing this for?" Questions like the implied reader's age, gender, ethnicity and familiarity with the topic will arise.

2.2.4.4 Citation

There are a number of citation systems; in English generally uses MLA form. Basically, MLA form ask the writer to demonstrate where he or she got every fact in a paper that is neither his or her own work or common knowledge. Then, MLA gives the student writer a tightly prescribed format for demonstrating those sources. For more information on citation, see the section in this work on "Citation basics."

2.2.4.5 Mechanical correctness

One aspect of composition that everyone knows is the struggle to get essays mechanically correct. Students in college writing, however, can be surprised to learn

that there are other, arguably more important, aspects to student writing. Still, if readers cannot follow what student writers are trying to convey, communication breaks down and the writer's **ethos** suffers. Although completely mistake-free papers can be elusive, savvy writers strive for mechanical correctness in all their work.

2.2.5 English 1102

When considering English 1102, it is important to remember that for many students, English 1102 is the *last* chance that they will have to take a class that focuses exclusively on academic writing. Skill development cannot be delayed any further; students enrolled in English 1102 will have to demonstrate their proficiency at college-level writing.

2.2.6 English 1102 and process-based writing

Just like as is English 1101, Gordon State College faculty teaching English 1102 are interested in the finished product, but also in seeing the steps—or process—a student writer has taken to create that piece of work. Interestingly, the same steps that serve the student writer in English 1101—reading, pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and submission—will be needed for successful completion of English 1102. However, the activities and approaches of each step is apt to be different as the student moves to English 1102.

2.2.6.1 Types of essays and activities in English 1102

Students in English 1102 should expect to write a variety of papers including annotated bibliographies, expository research papers, arguments, persuasive papers, proposals, literary papers, evaluations, and rhetorical analysis. Students in English 1102 will also do at least one oral presentation.

2.2.6.2 Annotated bibliography

It can be easy to get an “annotated bibliography” assignment mixed up with a “works cited.” The two do share some attributes—they both contain a list of MLA style resources used in a longer work—but there the similarities end. An annotated bibliography goes further and includes a summary of the work and sometimes an evaluation of the secondary source as well.

2.2.6.3 Research paper

Virtually all Gordon State College composition faculty members require a research paper or some variation on that assignment. The research paper assignment requires that the student writer gather, examine, analyze and synthesize a significant amount of

data and repackage that data in his or her own words according to accepted documentation policies.

2.2.6.4 Argument (also known as "position paper")

Convincing a potential date to go out with you, applying for a job, getting a parent to extend curfew for one special occasion –the process by which these goals were reached often involves argument. Rather than involving raised voices and name calling, real argument—in its rhetorical sense—can be defined as "a course of reasoning aimed at determining the truth or falsehood of a given claim or proposition" ("Argument"). Argument is a fundamental building block of college level writing—students should expect to create arguments throughout their academic careers—and it should come as no surprise that argument is one of the key assignments taught in English 1102

2.2.6.5 Persuasion

It is easy to get "persuasion" assignments confused with "argument" assignments. In fact, some faculty members even confuse or conflate the two assignments. Although the two styles of assignments share key attributes—they both try to change the minds of an audience who disagrees with the student writer—to many who study writing there is a key difference between persuasion and argument. To many, the key difference between the two is that "persuasion" essays utilize facts, statistics, and emotional reasoning, while "argument" essays stick to rational, fact-based arguments alone.

2.2.6.7 Oral Presentation

A University System of Georgia requirement, the oral presentation is a bit of an odd-ball assignment in that it asks the student to present information orally, not in writing. The oral presentation can be persuasive or expository and is often, but not always, linked to another English 1102 assignment such as the research paper or the argument.

2.2.6.8 Proposal (also known as "prospectus")

Usually linked to another, longer work a proposal assignment (aka "prospectus) is the instructor's way of making sure that the student gets off on the right foot and has chosen a topic that is likely to lead to a successful project. Although the proposal is often a short assignment, it should not be taken lightly and the student should think carefully about it before submission.

2.2.6.9 Literary essay (also known as "scholarly interpretation," "literary analysis," "poetry paper," "drama paper," or "fiction paper")

It can go by a lot of names, but one thing students in English 1102 might find themselves doing is writing about literature. It is worth mentioning that college literature assignments often ask the student writer to go far beyond mere summary and into analysis, looking at how a given piece of literature "works" as well as simply "what happens."

2.2.6.10 Evaluation

Evaluation essays usually seek to judge something's value or worth. Writers can (and do) evaluate anything: works of literature, methods of completing tasks, television shows, and restaurants are some of the categories that lend themselves to evaluation essays. Writers of evaluation essays will set criteria, collect evidence, and render judgment.

2.2.6.11 Rhetorical analysis (also known as "argument analysis")

A rhetorical analysis essay should never be confused with mere summary. Whereas summary is concerned with "what happened," rhetorical analysis essays examine the ways that a given text seeks to influence its readers—not so much "what is said," but rather *how* it was said. A rhetorical analysis paper examines things like tone, voice, and word choice.

2.2.6.12 Other activities

Of course, instructors vary and an individual instructor might have one or more other assignments for his or her English 1102 students during the course of a semester. Common activities in English 1102 include tests, examinations, group work, or in-class writings.

2.2.7 Types of Writing, English 1102, and *The Karate Kid*

If we thought of the assignments in English 1101 as the beginning of the movie *The Karate Kid* (1984 dir.: John G. Avildsen; remade in 2010 dir.: Harald Zwart), then the essays assigned in English 1102 are not unlike the end of the movie when the protagonist takes his skills and uses them in the final karate bout. So too will the Gordon State student use the skills he or she learned in English 1101 to "do battle" with the writing challenges of English 1102.

2.2.8 The English 1101 Skills Further Developed in English 1102

English 1101 sought to develop skills such as writing with depth and detail, specificity, audience awareness, proper citation and mechanical correctness. Those skills will be further augmented and enriched as the student moves through English 1102. For this reason, among others, it is strongly recommended that students take English 1102

during the semester *immediately* following their successful completion of English 1101 with a grade of "C" or better.

2.2.9 New skills developed in English 1102

In addition to honing the skills developed in English 1101, participation in English 1102 will develop new skills in the student writer such as critical thinking, writing for audience, writing with a sense of purpose, analysis, and synthesis.

2.2.9.1 Critical thinking

Critical thinking is one of those concepts that gets bandied about so often (and so casually) that it can be useful to stop for a moment and define exactly what is meant by the phrase. To most of the GSC faculty, critical thinking is the process of objective analysis and evaluation of data to form a rational judgment ("Critical thinking"). In this way, "**critical thinking**" differs from hunches, instinct, and one's "gut" reaction. In fact, and hunches can be looked at as opposites to **critical thinking**. For example, imagine being asked who was going to a win an upcoming football game. A native Atlantan might answer, "the Falcons, of course." But did the answerer respond in that matter because he or she really thought the Falcons would score more points than their opponent? Or did the answerer merely "hope" that the Falcons would win? If it was hope, then the respondent *wasn't* practicing critical thinking. If the prediction was based on observations and data –for example, the other team's starting By the way, if someone tells you that he "knows" the Falcons are going to win before the game begins, he's definitely *not* practicing **critical thinking** –sports are nothing if not unpredictable. For more information on critical thinking, see Section 3 of this work.

2.2.9.2 Audience awareness

English 1102 papers are fascinated by the concept of ***audience*** –or, the person or persons to whom the student writer's paper is addressed. Now, of course the professor is the student writer's audience, but usually there is another audience involved as well. In the case of an argument paper, the audience is usually composed of those who *disagree* with the student writer's position. In the case of an expository research paper, the audience might be composed of those who wish to learn more about the subject. Audience becomes a very important aspect of writing in English 1102.

2.2.9.3 Rhetorical purpose

Also known as **exigence**, a sense of rhetorical purpose is a natural outgrowth of thinking about audience. If a writer has an **audience**, he or she could do a number of different things with (or to) that audience. The writer could educate that audience, convince that audience, inspire that audience, motivate that audience or a number of

other options. Be aware that rhetorical purpose or **exigence** is not the same thing as topic. One topic could yield many different types of papers depending on what rhetorical purpose is chosen. For example, the topic could be “the 2016 Presidential election” but papers just explaining the election (expository), attempting to convince the reader to vote for one particular candidate (argument), or to demonstrate the importance of voting (motivational), would be very different works.

2.2.9.4 Textual analysis

When a television sports commentator shows highlights of a sporting match, or when a friend says something like, “I should have known it was going to be a terrible day when I walked out of the house without my cell phone this morning,” or when a financial reporter blames stock market woes on the number of housing starts in the preceding month, they’re doing **analysis. Analysis** involves taking something big apart and looking at its components carefully. Textual **analysis** involves pulling apart and looking for key moments (in a longer work, like a novel) or key lines (in a shorter work or poem). For example, a textual analysis of Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* might pull apart the rest of the long novel focus on (or “analyze”) the death scene of the Pip’s benefactor, the convict Magwitch. Textual analysis of T.S. Eliot’s modernist poem “The Waste Land” might focus on (again, “analyze”) the Sanskrit mantra, “Shantih, shantih, shantih” that appears at the poem’s end.

2.2.9.5 Synthesis

If “analysis” represents a “pulling apart,” then “**synthesis**” represents its opposite—a putting together. For example, if a hungry Gordon State student asked six classmates for their recommendations about the best fast food options in Barnesville and four colleagues recommended the chicken restaurant while two recommended the barbeque restaurant and all of them suggested staying away from the burger joint, the student could put all those opinions together (“synthesize”) and expect that the chicken restaurant might be the best one to try first.

2.2.10 Works cited

“Argument” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2015. (3 Mar. 2015).

“Critical thinking” *Dictionary.com Unabridged.* Random House, Inc. 2015 (20 Apr. 2015).

Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *The Waste Land.* New York: Horace Liveright, 1922; *Bartleby.com*, 2011. (22 Apr. 2015).

2.3 Mathematics

(See “Mathematical Communication” in **Section 5.6**.)

2.4 Top 8 Errors at Gordon State College

This section lists the most common errors your professors identify as the most commonly made at Gordon. The purpose is to explain what these errors are, how to identify them, and how to avoid them. The explanations are succinct, so look in the **Appendix** to this book for further explanations and examples of each term that you find in bold.

2.4.1 Comma splices, fragments, run-ons

These errors occur very commonly, and in many ways they often originate as **punctuation** errors as much as anything else.

2.4.1.1 Comma splices

A **comma splice** is a sentence **structure error** where a writer places a **comma** alone to join together two **independent clauses**.

Comma splices often occur only because the writer sensed that *some* punctuation mark was required in the space where the comma was put, but it should have been a **period**, **semicolon**, or **colon**.

Take the following examples to illustrate the point. The subjects and main verbs have been underlined for the sake of convenience:

> I decided to run for Secretary, it’s the job I’m most suited for.
> She thought she’d just pour water on it, she forgot to turn off the power.

Both cases feature a comma placed where a conjunction should have been placed, at least, or where a period or semicolon would have worked as well. Consider first how the sentences would look with periods where the commas were:

> I decided to run for Secretary. It’s the job I’m most suited for.
> She thought she’d just pour water on it. She forgot to turn off the power.

The four clauses could easily have been individual sentences. Consider also how the clauses would look with coordinating and subordinating conjunctions between them:

> I decided to run for Secretary, and it’s the job I’m most suited for.
> She thought she’d just pour water on it, but she forgot to turn off the power.

I decided to run for Secretary because it's the job I'm most suited for.
She thought she'd just pour water on it, though she forgot to turn off the power.

These changes do affect the meaning of the sentences, but that is also what conjunctions are for – they indicate how a reader should relate one idea to another.

> **NOTE:** Do not confuse the comma splice with other **comma errors**. Though it does involve a comma, it is more on the order of a **sentence fragment** or **run-on sentence** because it is a **sentence**-level error. (See **level error** in the **Appendix**.)

2.4.1.2 Fragments

A sentence **fragment** is a sentence structure error where a writer joins together a group of words, concludes them with an **end-sentence punctuation** mark, but the sentence is incomplete. The fragment can occur for any number of reasons:

A. it is missing a necessary part of its subject or predicate,
B. it begins with a **subordinating conjunction** and contains no **independent clause**, or
C. it is actually only a lengthy **relative clause**.

2.4.1.3 Run-ons

A **run-on** is a sentence structure error where a writer joins together two clauses into a sentence without any mark of punctuation at all. They are very similar to the comma splice, but they involve the absence of punctuation altogether.

2.4.2 Improper thesis statements

An argumentative **thesis** statement should be a statement of opinion on some debatable point or **issue**. Generally it appears at or near the end of the **introductory paragraph**, and ideally it should include a statement of reason.

> **NOTE:** It is best to get a general idea from your teacher before you write your essay what his or her stipulations are about the form and placement of a thesis statement. Some teachers have more particular requirements than others.

2.4.3 Misplaced punctuation

This is a very large topic, and it is addressed in various parts of this handbook, but the idea behind misplaced punctuation as an error is that a writer understands that a mark of punctuation is required, but places the wrong one in that place.

2.4.4 Subject-verb agreement

Subject-verb agreement errors usually occur when a writer fails to connect an action (the **verb**) with the performer of the action. The result is that there is a **plural** subject and a **singular** verb-form or a singular subject with a plural verb-form.

> The guys who helped my dad gets too much credit.
> That tree behind the azalea bushes were planted ten years ago.

There are many reasons why this may occur, but most often it is because the writer put so much distance (several **words** or even **phrases**) between the subject and its verb, as in the examples above. A writer might make the verb agree with a noun that stands between it and the subject of the verb. In the first case the writer forgets that "guys" is the subject of the sentence and is trying to make the verb ("to get") agree with "dad." Likewise, in the second example, the writer is trying to make "to plant" agree with "bushes" instead of the true subject ("tree").

2.4.5 Pronoun-antecedent agreement

Pronoun-antecedent errors occur when a writer fails to make a pronoun's **number** or **person** agree with the number or person of its antecedent. Often this is because the writer loses track of what pronouns are referring to what antecedents. Since any noun in a given sentence can be an antecedent, this is easy to do. During the **editing** and **proofreading** phases of the writing process, an effective writer should take special note of his or her pronouns, wherever they occur, and make certain that no other nouns in the vicinity of each pronoun could be construed as the antecedent except the intended antecedent.

2.4.6 Improper indication of the possessive

There are many ways to indicate the **possessive**, depending on the word itself – on the type of word it is and sometimes on the sound the word makes.

With **pronouns**, each **person** has its own **singular** and **plural** forms. This form of possessive is probably the easiest to understand. The following Table illustrates common examples of the possessive pronouns in each form:

Person	Singular	Plural

First	*my*	*our*
Second	*your*	*your*
Third	*his, her, its*	*their*

Nouns will have a possessive **inflection**, usually, taking the form most often of an *-'s*, and this is the part of possessives that can get complicated. If it is a noun or a **proper noun**, it will likely take the *-'s* inflection. The name "Arnold," for example, would be changed to "Arnold's," and the word "dog" would be changed to "dog's."

Further complicating things is the possessive plural noun, especially if the original word already ends in an *-s*. Suppose, for example, there is a family of people with the last name "James," and as a group, they own something. Is the possessive "James'," "Jameses'," or "James's"?

2.4.7 Quote integration mechanics

(See **Section 2.7.2** for further information on this topic.)

2.4.8 *Their*, *there*, and *they're*

These errors are common, obviously, because they are words that sound alike to the ear, but their meanings are almost entirely different.

> *Their* is a **possessive**, **plural**, **third-person determiner**. Writers use it to indicate that something belongs to a group of people.
>
> *There* is a **demonstrative adverb**. Writers use it to indicate that the position of something in relation to themselves is somewhat distant.
>
> *They're* is a **contraction** of *they* and *are*.

2.5 Top Questions Students Ask (FAQ's)

This section lists the questions teachers at Gordon find students asking most often. The purpose is to give a succinct answer to each of them, so students are encouraged to look in the **Appendix** to this book for further explanations and examples of each term that you find in bold.

2.5.1 "Can I ask questions in my essay?"

Well, of course you *can* ask questions, but generally speaking, no, you *may not* ask questions in your essay. There are several factors at play here, the first of which is **voice**. Asking questions in an essay is more a matter of *appropriateness* than

correctness. It depends on whether or not your teacher will allow it, but as a general rule, it is best to avoid asking questions.

The second factor is that asking questions influences the **structure** or **organization** of the essay, and often in a negative way.

2.5.2 "Why can't I use second person ('you')?"

In many ways, the answer to this question is an extension of the first. When a writer uses second person in his or her essay, the reader is being addressed directly, which is not usually appropriate in an academic writing context.

More often than not, however, when a writer uses second person pronoun in an essay, the antecedent of the pronoun is not made clear or is interchangeable with another pronoun nearby (often a **first-** or **third-person pronoun**).

2.5.3 "I know I need a conclusion paragraph, but what goes in it?"

After writing a full essay, it can be difficult to decide what to put into the conclusion to it. Many writers ask at that point, "what new information could I add?" It might be helpful to ask yourself two questions – "So what?" and "Who cares?"

2.5.4 "What's the difference between a **semicolon** and a **colon**?"

Before thinking of the differences between semicolons and colons, it is helpful to note their similarities. Both punctuation marks really should only occur at the end of a **clause**.

2.5.5 "When I am writing my essay and reporting other people's words or ideas, how do I know when to use **present tense** and when to use **past tense**?"

This can be a very difficult question to answer without practice. The best way to begin understanding the difference between using present tense and past tense is to think about the difference between spoken and written language. Spoken language is ethereal and impermanent, while written language is more or less static and fixed. If a person writes a story, publishes it, dies, and the story is written about one hundred years later, the story goes on after the writer dies *saying* the same thing forever. If that same person has a conversation with someone, then dies, then it is correct to refer to that conversation in the past tense (what that person *said*) because there is no written account of it one can refer to. (And even if there were, it would be most accurate to say that the written account *says* something about what the people in it *said* to one another.)

This being the case, it is most accurate to refer to anything that occurs in writing in the present tense and anything that does not in the past tense.

The main problem with this is usually not that a writer misunderstands so much as that he or she is not accustomed to writing in present tense for something he or she *read*, resulting usually in inconsistency, as the person carelessly switches from one tense to the next.

2.5.6 "In **punctuation**, how do I know when to use a **dash** and when to use **parentheses**? What's the difference between them?"

This is a case where **tone** becomes important because there are many cases where a dash and parentheses are both correct to use, but one or the other is more appropriate to what message you want to send.

2.5.7 "How do I write better **transitions**?"

The best way to improve transitions is to remember what it is that transitions really *are* and what they *can be*. Once a writer understands their function in an essay, then the possibilities open up. Writers use transitions to help readers understand how information that follows them should be understood in relation to information that comes before them. In truth, transitions are just as simple and as complex as that. […]

2.5.8 "How do I get started with this **essay**?"

(See **Section 3.2**, "Invention," for further information on this topic.)

2.5.9 "What's the difference between **quotation marks** and **italics**?"

There are many areas where the use of quotation marks and the use of italics overlap. In many instances the differences are most apparent in **documentation mechanics**. (See **Section 2.6.2.4** for explanations on the proper usage of italics and quotation marks in documentation.) But this section focuses more on the non-documentation-related differences between quotation marks and italics.

2.5.9.1 Italics

Apart from the documentation uses, italics should be used to indicate

- the names of aircraft, ships, spacecraft, and trains
  Hughes H-4 Hercules *RMS Lusitania* *Voyager* *Crescent*
- words and phrases of foreign origin that have not become a part of the English language
  Festina lente *habeus corpus*
- scientific names of plants and animals
  Cladrastus kentuckia *Enteroctopus dofleini*
- words used as words or letters used as letters

- emphasis

    No you are *not* telling me this again!

Note also when italics should *not* be used, but often are:

- words and phrases of foreign origin that have become a part of the English language
  clichés
- a writer's own essay title

2.5.9.2 Quotation marks

Apart from the documentation uses, quotation marks should be used to indicate

- informal titles
- an unstable term (a term with a meaning or applicability that has not been established)
- words spoken by someone, as in dialogue.

> **NOTE:** One useful (though not universal) rule to follow with quotation marks is to use them as some people do in speech, when they describe something while making quotation marks with their fingers. This is a tendency people have in speech that generally carries over to writing as well.

Note also when quotation marks should *not* be used, but often are:

- a writer's own essay title

> **NOTE:** A good illustration of the difference between using italics and using quotation marks can be found in one of the italics examples above: the *Hughes H-4 Hercules*. This was an aircraft designed by inventor Howard Hughes. Hughes had been so ambitious in his plans for it and materials used to build it that members of the press took to calling his plane by a disparaging nickname, "The Spruce Goose." Note that the official name of the aircraft is given in italics and the nickname is given in quotation marks.

- Book titles
- Movie titles

2.5.10 "What's the difference between *lay* and *lie*?"

Many people who try to understand this one find it difficult, and it is hard to find a concise answer that is easily understood. Perhaps the easiest answer is this: *to lay* is a **verb** in need of an **object**, and *to lie* is a verb that does not take an object. Here are two examples to illustrate the point:

Please <u>lie</u> down for a while.
Now I <u>lay</u> me down to sleep.

Both sentences have similar constructions – *lay* or *lie* for the verb, followed by *down* to indicate manner. The difference is with the inclusion of *me* in the second sentence: in the first sentence the thing (or in this case the person) being set down is not mentioned, and in the second the person ("me") being set down is specifically mentioned in the form of a **direct object**.

To complicate matters, however, *lay* actually is the past **tense** form of the verb *lie*. That being the case, the following sentence would also be correct:

Usually, we would <u>lay</u> down for a while.

2.6 Tips to improve your writing style

The following is a list of suggestions for improving your writing **style**. Bear in mind that style differs from grammar in that it has less to do with "correctness" than it has to do with "appropriateness" and to some extent "effectiveness."

2.6.1 Close up the distance between subject and verb.

After writing a sentence initially, take a moment to consider what is the **subject** of the sentence and what is the beginning of the sentence's **predicate**. The relationship of subject to predicate is important for understanding the sentence's meaning because the subject indicates what the sentence is about, and the predicate indicates what the subject does or is. More often than perhaps any other issue, writers tend to insert language between the subject and predicate that obscures this connection.

A common stylistic issue writers have is that they insert a **prepositional phrase** between the subject and the predicate, when that phrase could have been converted into a **modifier** that came before the subject. Consider the following example:

The King <u>of Spain</u> <u>from Castile</u>

Note that the two underlined phrases are both prepositional phrases, modifying "King," by giving a reader more information about who the King is. Remember that prepositional phrases are modifiers of something, and the more that are tacked on after the word they are modifying, the more redundant they can be. Also note that modifiers can go *before*

the words they modify, as well as after. The above example can be reduced and enlivened in this way:

The Castilian King of Spain

OR

Spain's Castilian King

OR even

Spain's King is a Castilian

In the third case, more than merely converting a prepositional phrase into an adjective, a **linking verb** has been added, making the term "Castilian" the **subject complement**.

(Also see **Section 2.6.4** for more information on converting prepositional phrases into modifiers)

2.6.2 Close up verb phrases.

Verbs occur in **phrase** form more often than on their own. They can be accompanied by **auxiliaries** to indicate additional information about a verb's **tense** and **mood**. Writers often insert words between the individual parts of **verb phrases**, to the detriment of the meaning in their sentences.

The first and easiest way to deal with this issue is to be mindful of verb phrases to begin with.

2.6.3 Close up the distance between modifiers and the words they modify.

It can be confusing for a reader when it is unclear what word in a sentence an **adjective** is **modifying**, and it can be confusing for the writer, too. This is especially true of **adverbs** because they are so moveable.

2.6.4 Convert prepositional phrases into modifiers where possible.

Prepositional phrases are modifiers in their own right – they give further information about the **nouns**, **verbs**, or **adjectives** they are connected to. That being the case, the **object** of each prepositional phrase is the most essential information contained in it and can usually be converted into an **adjective** or **adverb**. (See **Section 2.3.4** for further information on prepositional phrases.)

Consider this sentence as an instructive example:

The man <u>from Castile</u> <u>in my garden</u> loves geography.

The underlined sections “from Castile” and “in my garden” are prepositional phrases. The sentence itself is correct, but the prepositional phrases make it unwieldy. One easy approach the writer of this sentence could have taken would be to convert one of those phrases into a modifier of some kind. Here is an example:

The <u>Castilian</u> man in my garden loves geography.

In this case the **object of the preposition** from the first sentence (“Castile”) has been converted into a modifier for the word “man,” and the meaning of the sentence is made more clear.

2.6.5 Reduce the usage of empty constructions.

Many writers have a tendency to begin sentences with **subject**-and-**verb** constructions that have very little inherent meaning. Sentences that begin with “It is…” or “There are…” are good examples of this. In the case of “It is…,” a construction is created of a **pronoun** (“it”) with no clear **antecedent** and the linking verb *to be* without a **complement**. Those details will be made apparent later in the sentence, but even so, the readers have already read the subject and the verb of the sentence without knowing who or what the sentence is about or why they are reading it to begin with.

2.6.6 Reduce over-reliance on linking verbs.

As the **Appendix** notes, a **linking verb** is a verb used to “link” the **subject** of a sentence with its **subject complement**. There is very little difference between the complement and an **adjective**, however.

2.6.7 Be mindful of word order in restrictive and non-restrictive elements.

Often also called “essential” and “non-essential” elements, restrictive and non-restrictive elements follow **nouns** and give more information about them. They most often occur in the form of a **phrase**. They occur often, but not much attention is often paid to the word order within them, which can be cause for some grammatical awkwardness.

Simply put, a restrictive element narrows the reader’s understanding of the noun it modifies, and a non-restrictive element adds information to the noun without narrowing the reader’s understanding. (See **comma** in the **Appendix**, usage rule **#4**, for examples of sentence with restrictive and non-restrictive elements.)

The most common word-order error in a restrictive element is placing the **preposition** at the end of a prepositional phrase.

2.6.8 Be mindful of voice.

This is a large topic, so be sure to look for the bold-faced terms in the answer for much fuller explanations. A writer's **voice** is the features of his or her writing that indicate his or her attitude or relationship with the subject matter, and these features can range from the sentence level to essay level.

Often, when a student hears the word "voice," their mind goes to the term "passive voice." This is one of those sentence-level elements of voice. A sentence is written in the passive voice when the subject of the sentence is not performing the main action of the sentence.

One important factor in voice is to remain consistent with it. A writer can easily slip from one voice to another.

2.6.9 Be mindful of diction.

This is an area where a thesaurus might be effective if used responsibly, though thesauruses are more often used ineffectively and inappropriately. **Diction** is the word selection a writer uses – his or her vocabulary – and since it is a topic of **style**, it is a question of whether the word choices made are *appropriate* to the situation or not.

2.7 Citation Basics

Citation is the part of writing that involves giving credit where it most properly belongs. When a person speaks using his or her fingers as quotation marks ("air quotes"), that person is actually acting on the same impulse he or she should be following when correctly citing someone: quotation marks are what we use in language to establish some kind of distance between our own ideas and opinions and others' ideas and opinions.

For example, when a person uses his or her fingers as quotation marks to say

> Stacy said she was **"**too sleepy**"** to do any work

that person is communicating to a listener that the words enclosed in quotation marks are Stacy's words and not necessarily the words the speaker him or herself would use to describe Stacy's true frame of mind. Consider how that sentence would look without the quotation marks:

> Stacy said she was too sleepy to do any work

In this case the words "too sleepy" may or may not be Stacy's, but the speaker's frame of mind doesn't seem to be any different from Stacy's: the speaker isn't skeptical about whether or not Stacy really was as sleepy as she said she was, or about whether or not "sleepiness" is a legitimate reason for not doing her work.

This is one of the many ways quotation marks can be used. **(See Section 2.6.2.4 and Appendix for further information on punctuating with quotation marks.)** It is important when it comes to citation because quotation marks differentiate one person's words from another person's words. The speaker in the first example doesn't want the listener thinking that he or she actually believes Stacy's excuse.

These examples illustrate the basic point, but it does get more complicated than just putting quotation marks around other people's words. In most writing contexts, people are thought to have more or less a trademark on their ideas and on the **clauses** and **phrases** they use to express those ideas. **(See the Appendix for further information on clauses and phrases.)** Writers who borrow from other people's ideas are expected to keep an appropriate and respectful distance from other people's ideas so that it is clear what thought or expression of a thought belongs to whom.

Unlike the example above with Stacy, a writer could actually share another person's frame of mind and still need to quote them word for word:

> I agree with Stacy that "being too sleepy is reason enough to get out of performing open-heart surgery."

In this case the quotation marks enclose words containing Stacy's point of view and the words Stacy used to describe it. This is an expectation both Stacy and the listener have every right to expect from the speaker or writer because it clarifies who said what.

> **NOTE:** This section should be understood as a guide to MLA citations basics and not an exhaustive resource. There are plenty of resources available that give more examples of how to cite some less-than-standard sources using MLA.

2.7.1 A Case for Academic Honesty

It isn't just for clarity that writers should do this, though. It is an issue of **academic honesty** that they should. (See **Section 8** for a fuller discussion of academic honesty.) If Stacy is not present to defend herself in a conversation about her work ethics, for example, then she has reason enough to expect that the person using her words to describe her frame of mind will do so as accurately and as faithfully to her original intent for them as he or she possibly can.

The best way to think of academic honesty might be to say that when a writer uses someone else's ideas or words in an essay, it is something like borrowing that person's personal property. This is why we use the term "**intellectual property**" to describe someone else's intellectual work. (And we put the term "intellectual property" in quotation marks because it is not a term that we coined.) When a person allows us to

use their property outside of his or her presence, they expect us to use it responsibly and for the purposes for which it was intended. It is illegal to do otherwise, and part of the reason for that is that since the owner is not present to protect his or her property, abuse of that property is an abuse of that person's trust that we will use it correctly. The owner put a good deal of work into acquiring that property (or into producing it in the case of intellectual property), and that is important to respect.

A person does have limitations to the use of his or her intellectual property, however, so long as the person using it is not making money off of it.

In academic writing and in some other forms or purposes of writing, the expectation is that a person will use other writers' words or ideas responsibly and respectfully through the use of **citation**. Depending on the field of study a person is writing for, there are several different **formats** for citing, but this chapter will focus specifically on **MLA format** in its examples. **(See Section 2.6.4 for further information on other citation formats.)** In any citation format, crediting other sources occurs in two places in the essay: in the **in-text citations** and in the **list of works cited**. The in-text citations occur in the body of the essay and may appear something like this:

> I disagree with one critic who says that "a floor lamp's design should always be a function of its utility" (Jenkins 37).

As above, this is a quote from someone. We know this because of the quotation marks and because of what is called the **parenthetical citation** following it. What goes in the parentheses is a name and a number. Format enables a reader to understand the significance of that name and that number. Knowing that this essay is written in MLA format, a person knows that "Jenkins" is the last name of the author who wrote this statement, and "37" is the page number on which that statement can be found in Jenkins's source.

Suppose a reader wants to know more about Jenkins's comment on the design of floor lamps? Suppose a reader wants to see it in the larger context in which it was stated? (After all, another part of the reason citation is important is because it literally means you are taking someone else's ideas out of context and putting them into your own, somewhat different context.) In that case, a person who knows this is written in MLA format knows how to find out more by going to the **list of works cited** at the end of the essay. There the interested person will find a list of all the sources cited in the essay. In that list the reader will find something that might look like this:

> Jenkins, Al. *Event Horizon: An Intellectual Primer on the History and Design Intricacies of Western Floor Lamps*. Boston: Marvin, 2009.

All of the details in this list entry are important to a reader in finding the information he or she wants to see. A reader is able to identify this as the entry he or she is looking for because it has "Jenkins" as the first word, and that reader will remember that "Jenkins" was the word given in the in-text citation. (The in-text citation should always be the first word of the entry in the list of works cited.) From this entry a reader knows also the title of Jenkins's book and the publisher and year of publication. All a person would need to do now to find the quote from the in-text citation is find Jenkins's book and turn to page 37 (the number in the in-text citation.

2.7.2 Integrating quotes (In-text citations)

The important thing to remember about in-text citations is that they must be grammatically **integrated** into your own essay. This is a part of MLA documentation that many readers find very frustrating, but it is a necessity nonetheless. Grammatical integration means that, when quoting and citing other people's material, a writer must incorporate not only a person's ideas, but his or her *language* as well. Integrating quotes grammatically is another level of involvement with another person's material, and it is in additional way of putting another's ideas into a new context with the writer's. (See **Section 2.7.2.1** on paraphrasing and summarizing for an additional perspective on this.) Take this quote on page 186 from a book called *The Ashley Book of Knots* as an example:

> "As the line or rope that provided the knot is no longer in use, the Bowline Knot is nowadays very apt to be termed merely the 'Bowline,' the word *knot* being dropped" (Ashley 186).

The quote itself is a complete sentence from that book, but if a writer were incorporating the quote into an essay of his or her own, it would be inappropriate to drop it into the essay as it appears above. This is because it is inappropriate to include a quote from someone without establishing a context for it. While the above example provides a reader with all of the information he or she might need to find the quote (i.e. the author's name and the page number), it does not indicate the relevance of the quote to the point being made in the essay writer's argument.

Often, the solution to the problem can be as simple as writing

> One writer argues that, "As the line or rope that provided the knot is no longer in use, the Bowline Knot is nowadays very apt to be termed merely the 'Bowline,' the word *knot* being dropped" (Ashley 186).

There are many more descriptive and imaginative ways to integrate quotes than this, however. For example, one might say

> One expert argues that the material used to tie a knot can affect the way that we think of the knot itself**:** “As the line or rope that provided the knot is no longer in use, the Bowline Knot is nowadays very apt to be termed merely the ‘Bowline,’ the word *knot* being dropped” (Ashley 186).

In this case, the quote is the same, but the essay writer’s material is separated from the quoted material by a **colon**. This allows the writer to expand his or her commentary to the level of an **independent clause**. **(See the Appendix for further information on independent clauses.)** As discussed elsewhere in this guide, there are some limitations to the use of a colon to introduce a quote, though. (See the **Appendix** for further information on colons and **Section 2.7.2.3** for further specific information on citations using colons.)

There are many rules of MLA documentation, but they leave a great deal of latitude for a writer, still. For example, a writer could incorporate the same quote by moving the author’s name out of the citation:

> **Clifford W. Ashley**, an expert on the art and science of knot-tying, says that “As the line or rope that provided the knot is no longer in use, the Bowline Knot is nowadays very apt to be termed merely the ‘Bowline,’ the word *knot* being dropped” (**186**).

Notice in this case that the two critical bits of information for a reader who wants to find out more about this quote are there for him or her to see. The name of the author has been made the subject of the sentence, and the page number has remained in the citation. The most important thing is that a reader will understand that the source can be found in the essay’s works cited page by the surname “Ashley,” and the quote itself can be found on page 186 of that source.

Below is a chart, with guidelines on how certain texts of certain descriptions can be cited in-text.

2.7.2.1 Verb Choice and Tense

A careful reader will already know a great deal about the source used in the example above without even reading its entry on the works cited page. The author’s full name is given, as is the title of the book, the page number the quote is from, and a little bit of what the book is about. A works cited entry for this book would appear this way on the works cited page:

> Ashley, Clifford W. *The Ashley Book of Knots*. New York: Doubleday, 1944. Print.

One important detail a reader might notice about this book is that it was published in 1944. The author himself (Clifford W. Ashley) died only three years afterwards. These

things being the case, it seems odd to some readers and writers that the examples above use the verb "says" or "argues" to describe quotes from Ashley's book. "He wrote the book decades ago," they will say, "and he's no longer alive to say or believe these things." So, they will wonder, "why would you say that he *says* these things, rather than *said* them?"

The rules about **verb tense** can be tricky when it comes to documentation. (See the **Appendix** for more information on verb tense in general.) Take this quote from the same book as an example:

> Ashley **says** that "A knot **is** never 'nearly right'; it **is** either exactly right or it **is** hopelessly wrong, one or the other; there **is** nothing in between" (18).

The verbs in this quote are all set apart to emphasize an important point about verb tense. Both the essay writer's and Ashley's verbs are in present tense for the same reasons. Ashley put his comments in the **present tense** because he believed his statements about knots and correctness would be true whether he was alive or not. Likewise, the essay writer uses the present tense ("says") to describe Ashley's comments about knots because the book in which the comments can be found has continued to "say" the same thing long after Ashley passed away. The idea to remember is that, so long as a quote can still be found, a writer should always think of it in the present, even when the author of the quote *wrote* it down long before.

The only circumstance in which a quote should be referred to in **past tense** ("said," for example), would be if the essay writer is referring to a source that no longer exists. For example, if a quote comes from a book that is no longer available to anyone because it has been destroyed or permanently lost, then details from the book only exist in memory or lore. This does not happen very often, though. It is more common for a person to quote from a web site that has been taken down or altered from a past form. It also happens even more often that an essay writer cites a comment or statement (in a speech, for example) that has been unrecorded. In each of these cases an essay writer will refer to those comments in the past tense (as being "said").

This being the case, is it most appropriate to state that an author *says* something when it is more accurate to say that it is *written down*? This is a very good point, but in academic writing "to say" is an accepted term to describe something in writing, and that is mostly because other, perhaps more accurate, terms (*writes*, *declares*, etc.) can seem archaic and draw unnecessary attention to themselves. For the sake of accuracy, it is acceptable to use terms like *argues*, *states*, *claims*, *posits*, or a host of others, but a writer should have good reason for doing so when a more straightforward choice like *says* will suffice.

When making verb choices to integrate a quote grammatically, it is also important to select a verb that accurately describes the action you are describing. For example, writers often use the term *discusses* to introduce a quote, though it is a poor choice since “discuss” implies an ongoing debate that is larger than a single quote.

> **Rule of Thumb:** In making word choices, it is worse to be inaccurate than to be redundant.

2.7.2.2 Paraphrasing and summarizing

There are other circumstances where the handling of other people’s intellectual property may involve the use of the **paraphrase** or **summary**. **(See Section 8 for further information.)** It may be best to think of the use of other people’s information in terms of length and exactness:

- While a **quote**, as described above in this section, involves the incorporation of someone else’s *words*, *exactly as they are written*, with the use of **quotation marks**,
- a **paraphrase** involves the incorporation of someone else’s *ideas*, *without omissions*, but converted into language suited to a different context, and
- a **summary** involves the incorporation of someone else’s *ideas*, but including only the most *relevant* or *important* ones.

The system is based on the idea that a person’s **intellectual property** rights extend not only to his or her ideas, but also to the words used to express those ideas.

2.7.2.3 Citation mechanics

A few basics of citation mechanics are covered throughout **Section 2.7.2**, but some more specific aspects of citation are necessary.

An in-text citation should provide the first word of its entry on the works cited page.

A parenthetical citation hardly ever has a comma in it. The only circumstance where this is acceptable is if there is more than one source cited by the same author.

There should be punctuation of some kind following each parenthetical citation. This may be a period, but it also may be a comma.

There is no rule that citation should occur only at the end of a sentence. If a writer finds a circumstance where the first half of the sentence is a quote, but the second half is information that is original to writer, then he or she should put the citation before the original ideas begin. (See the **Appendix** for further information on basic sentence structures.)

For example, if this sentence were to appear in an essay –

> I disagree with one critic who says that “a floor lamp’s design should always be a function of its utility” (Jenkins 37).

– and the essay writer wanted to explain a little more about why he or she disagreed with Jenkins’s position on floor lamp design than just that he or she disagreed, then the writer might revise it this way:

> One critic says that “a floor lamp’s design should always be a function of its utility” (Jenkins 37), but this point of view does not take into account reductions to form and color done in interior design by the school of neoplasticism in early twentieth-century Holland.

This example illustrates how the placement of documentation is important to communicating the difference between a writer’s original ideas and a cited critic’s. If the writer were to have put the documentation at the end of the sentence, it would have looked like this:

> One critic says that “a floor lamp’s design should always be a function of its utility,” but this point of view does not take into account reductions to form and color done in interior design by the school of neoplasticism in early twentieth-century Holland (Jenkins 37).

And in that case, a reader might think that he or she was looking at a sentence that first provides a direct quote from the source written by Jenkins, followed by a summary or paraphrase that is also by Jenkins, all of which could be found on page 37 of that source. In that case, not only would the writer not be taking credit for his or her own original ideas, but also the writer would seem to be implying that Jenkins wrote or thought something very different from what Jenkins thought or believed.

Quotes can also be integrated with the use of **colons**, particularly if a writer wants to incorporate a quote in **clause** form. It enables the writer to attach more commentary to the quote, and it is less invasive to the quote itself. Consider the following example:

> One critic considers lamps from an ultra-pragmatic standpoint: “a floor lamp’s design should always be a function of its utility” (Jenkins 37).

2.7.2.4 Italics and quotation marks

MLA handbooks don’t say much about when to use italics and when to underline, but MLA does treat underlining and italicization interchangeably. A writer should therefore understand that, in circumstances where it is clear that underlining or italicization is called for, he or she should do one or the other each and every time: either italicize

every time, or underline every time. It is usually best to italicize if the technology is available to do so.

> **Rule of Thumb:** If the source being cited was published in standalone form, it should be cited in italics; if it was published as a part of a larger publication, it should be cited in quotation marks.

2.7.2.5 Authors' last names instead of first

Sources should be cited in-text by their last names only. It is a mark of professionalism to do so. It is inappropriate to refer to authors by their first names or by their titles (Dr., Prof., Mr., Mrs., etc.)

2.7.2.6 Reference markers

It can happen that a writer refers to the specific **details** of a source, but instead of given in **print**, those details occur in some other, non-linguistic **medium**. In cases like that, **spatial** or **temporal** reference markers are acceptable.

In other cases, the source might be a print source, but there are more specific reference markers available than page numbers. This is especially true in the case of a poem or some plays. In cases like that, where a line number or act, scene, and line number are available, those numbers ought to be given instead of the page number because they are more specific reference points.

Likewise, in the case of more formalized poetic forms, like the Sonnet for example, a writer may refer to its individual parts. "In the second quatrain,…" for example, or "In the sestet, …"

2.7.3 A guide for the works cited page

Most of the material above is relevant to the material here. As suggested above, the MLA documented essay has two dimensions to it – the in-text citations and the works cited page.

2.7.3.1 The basic works cited entry

The basic format of any type of works cited entry is this:

Author's Name. Title. Publication information. Medium.

Any works cited entry – regardless of its type – will follow this basic pattern. Note the punctuation of this example and the background colors of each section. A period is used

to signify the end of each section. A works cited entry should not have this colors included, but the colors are provided here to assist in the examples in the following pages.

The author's name, if it is given, should be included first, with the last name first, first name last, with a comma separating the two **(See Section 2.6.2.5 for further information)**, followed by a period. Sometimes things are written by more than one author, and sometimes no author is listed at all. If there is more than one author, and no more than three, it would appear this way in the author's name section of a works cited entry:

Jenkins, Al, Reggie Davis, and Amy Anthony.

Notice that the names are not alphabetized. This would be because Al Jenkins was listed as the primary author of the book being cited, and that can be determined by carefully reading the first page of the source. Generally speaking, publishing follows the same rule as movie studios follow for billing a film: the biggest star gets his or her name featured most prominently or listed nearer the top of the movie poster. The same for academic writing – the primary author is listed before the others on the first page.

The format for title and publication information varies greatly depending on the type of source, so see the following subsections of **2.7.3** for further information on how to cite those. The **medium**, however, is easier to determine: it is the method by which the content of the source is delivered.

2.7.3.2 Books

The basic works cited entry for a book will be very similar to the example in the previous section, but the title will be given in italics. Here is a basic example of a works cited entry for a book:

Jenkins, Al. *Lamplight*: *Lighting the Way*. McElroy: New York, 1997. Print.

Other information may be added, depending on the type of book. This might include the edition number, additional authors, graphic novels, etc. Most of all of this information can be found on the book's **title page**, while some of it can be found on the book's **copyright page**.

The title of the book should be given in italics. (See Section **2.7.2.4** for further information on the rationale for this.) As this example shows, the **subtitle** should be given in italics, also, with a colon between it and the main title.

The publication information generally will list an abbreviated version of the publisher's name, followed by a colon, followed by the city of publication, followed by a comma,

followed by the year of publication, concluding with a period. The city of publication will be the first city listed on the title page, and the year of publication will be the most recent year listed on the publication page. It is acceptable and expected that the publisher's name will be abbreviated.

Generally, the medium will be listed as "Print" unless it was accessed electronically, in which case the medium will be listed as "Web" or "Kindle file" or whatever the case may be.

2.7.3.3 Articles

The basic works cited entry for an article will be a bit different, mainly because there are two titles involved: the title of the article and the title of the journal it was published in. The basic principles are the same, though. Here is a basic example of a works cited entry for an article in an academic journal:

> Mallory, Steven. "Flora and Fauna on the Yucatan Peninsula." *Journal of Mexican Wildlife Studies* 36.2 (2005): 17-36. Print.

The title of an article should be given in quotation marks, and the title of the journal should be given in italics. (See **Section 2.7.2.4** for further information on the rationale for this.)

Also, the example includes the journal title in the blue highlighted area, rather than in the green highlighted area, where the title goes. This is because the article itself was published *in* this particular journal, making it a part of the publication information.

2.7.4 Other Documentation Formats

Documentation formats are reflections of the academic disciplines that produce them, and what is most valued or important will be reflected through its emphasis in the documentation format.

Chapter 3 – Area B (Critical Thinking)

Area B of the Core Curriculum requires all students to take a Colloquium course (COLQ). Each of these courses involves the application of critical thinking to a general area of study. This is a universal requirement, regardless of a student's area of study, which underscores the significance the University System places on it. In fact, in an informal survey of many Gordon professors, most stated critical thinking as one of the areas they want their students to be most improved.

3.1 Critical thinking

The requirement of any COLQ course involves the composition or creation of some **critical thinking** project. Likewise, there will be elements of critical thinking in all areas of the curriculum. That is what the COLQ course requirement is for. It is helpful, then, to understand what critical thinking really is, even before taking the COLQ course, since ENGL 1101 and 1102 require some element of critical thinking.

Critical thinking involves the establishment of some **opinion** or some **fact**, along with the justification for that opinion or fact in a manner that is effective for the **readership**. If it is helpful, think of it as a simple formula:

Critical thinking = [OPINION/OBSERVATION] + [JUSTIFICATION]

With writing, critical thinking is important because it requires a writer to think carefully about the task of writing – not only about the **subject** of the essay, but about how effective the essay is and how effectively it is being written. A portion of this chapter is dedicated to those universal rules for critical thinking as they apply to writing. They are applicable to any subject-area of study.

3.2 Invention

Invention is that phase of the writing process where a writer develops a generalized idea of what will go into the essay into a somewhat coherent essay.

> **NOTE:** There is an important difference between invention and **composition**. An idea exists in a person's mind and on the written page very differently. This has to do with the fact that writing and reading are *linear* – the words come to us one after another – whereas in thinking, our thoughts are more of a jumble. For this reason, it is the rare writer who taps her skull and says, "No, I haven't written it yet, but it's all up here," who actually can write it out in a short sitting.

3.2.1 Purpose

Understanding *why* a writer is writing – what is the intended outcome – is an important early step. There are many factors to consider. Without purpose, the thing would not be written in the first place.

3.2.1.1 Readership

The **readership** is essentially everyone who will read the essay. Many writers do not take into account how the readership of an essay will affect its final form. Whether they consider the needs and wants of their reader or they don't, the fact remains that readers think differently, and thinking of how to take advantage of those differences can make an essay more effective.

The readership could be just about anyone – someone old, someone young, someone familiar, someone unknown, one person, more than one person, etc.

> Here is one illustration that helps to understand **readership** and its importance. Consider the possibility that nothing has ever been written without a readership in mind. Even in that case, if a person writes reminder notes, notes for class, or even in a diary, though that person never intended them to be read, there is still the future self who will look at it – the forgetful person that afternoon, the student who means to review for a test, or the diarist looking back.
>
> It is helpful to ask this question, then: If a person sits and writes "Dear Diary…," to whom is that writer writing? What kind of a reader is that diarist envisioning?

It can help, in writing for school, to be very practical about readership. For the most part, in college, the readership is limited to the professor. Still, there are circumstances where a student writes for fellow classmates to read. (See **Section 3.6**, "Collaboration," for more information about this.)

3.2.1.2 To persuade (vs. to argue)

It is helpful to have some idea of the difference between **persuasive** writing and **argumentative** writing. Argument is a *form* of persuasive writing: to argue is one way available to a writer to persuade his or her reader to a certain point of view. There are other ways to be persuasive, however. One can threaten his or her readers, manipulate their fears and wishes, etc.

> One of the best methods of measuring persuasiveness is this: if, after reading an essay, the readers proceed to think and do exactly as the writer intended them to think and do, then the essay was persuasive. A good deal of persuasiveness has to do with *intent*

because if the readership responds differently, then the essay is less persuasive. Either way, no writer can reasonably expect exactly what was intended. A writer might then talk about his or her writing as "particularly" persuasive or "more" persuasive than usual.

3.2.1.3 To inform

There is also a very important distinction between persuading and **informing** that cannot be overstated. To inform is to communicate information to a reader without attempting him or her to accept some opinion or belief connected to it.

There is an undercurrent of argument even to informing, however, especially in a college setting. Though the purpose of an essay might be to inform a professor the findings of some laboratory project, the student is still persuading the professor that he or she understood the assignment and how to do it and that a good grade is therefore warranted.

3.2.1.4 Length

The required length of an essay is important enough to consider in this section. In writing situations, it might be understood as a minimum page length, word length, or in many cases the length of time allowed to complete the assignment.

This might not seem like a very important factor, but it is actually critical when it comes to establishing a writing topic, as is explained in **Sections 3.2.2-3.2.7** of this chapter.

3.2.2 Subject

It's helpful to understand the **subject** of an essay. The subject will be the most generalized term to describe what the essay will be about. It is usually expressible as a **word** or short **phrase**.

For the remainder of **Section 3.2**, we will follow the development of a handful of subjects, from basic ideas to suitable essay topics and issues.

Steroids in baseball
Cell phone usage

Often the subject will be handed to you, and other times you will have to come up with a subject all on your own. Either way, a subject is rarely specific enough to make a suitable essay topic. It is merely a place to start. Professional writers dedicate whole books and even their careers in some cases to subjects like these.

3.2.3 Topic

The **topic** is a continuation of the **subject** toward an effective essay: it is a more specific area within the subject that is manageable in the space of an essay. Usually a topic is expressible in a **phrase**.

Consider the following topics as extensions of the subjects listed in **Section 3.2.2**. There can be many more, but these are included for the sake of discussion.

(On “steroids in baseball”:)

- Causes of steroid usage in baseball
- Effects of steroid usage on baseball pitchers

(On “cell phone usage”:)

- Cell phone usage in moving vehicles
- Laws governing cell phone usage

Notice the similarities between the way these potential topics are worded and the way the **modes** of development later in **Section 3.3.1**.

3.2.4 Issue

The issue is a feature of invention in **argument**. It is expressible as a **question**, and it anticipates a statement of the writer’s **opinion** on a debatable topic. In the Subject-Topic-Issue scheme, it is only relevant in the case of argument or **persuasion**.

(On “steroids in baseball”:)

- What are the true contributing causes to steroid usage in baseball?
- Is steroid usage a problem significant enough to warrant stronger action?
- Should Congress involve itself in baseball’s steroid problem?
- Does steroid usage affect position players differently?

(On “cell phone usage”:)

- How should we deal with cell phone usage problems?
- How is cell phone usage being dealt with?
- What constitutes “cell phone *usage*” anyway?

These are only a few examples of the directions a writer could take to address the topics from **Section 3.2.3**, and the topics themselves will be further examined later in this chapter.

3.2.5 Logic

Logic is thought and reason made valid through structure rather than content. This is a statement that is direct enough and seems to make good sense…until it is carefully examined. The key hang-up for most people in this definition is over what is meant by “structure” and “content.”

The basic idea is that an argument of any kind is convincing because of the way it is “built”: there are certain ways of arranging ideas to make them compelling to any reasonable person. Primarily, logic is built upon **premises** and **conclusions**, and conclusions are reached because of the way the premises are stated.

3.2.5.1 Basic forms of reasoning

Perhaps the two most basic forms of logical statement are deductive and inductive reasoning. These forms gain their validity through the arrangement of general and specific statements, and though they are rarely stated as succinctly as they are here, close examination of almost any argument will reveal them in some form or another.

3.2.5.1.1 Deductive

Deductive reasoning involves the statement of at least two accepted ideas generally accepted as facts (two premises, in other words) and a conclusion reached from those facts that might not be generally accepted as fact necessarily.

The classic example of a deductive argument is on Socrates and mortality. It reads thus:

1. All men are mortal.
2. Socrates is a man.
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

This very basic syllogism illustrates the point well enough. Statements #1 and #2 are the premises – the generally accepted viewpoint of the average person, and Statement #3 is a conclusion not as generally accepted (especially by someone like Socrates was). The strength of the argument is in its logic: if a person agrees with the premises, that all people are mortal and that Socrates is a person, then that person is compelled to accept the conclusion that Socrates is mortal. There is no other, *logical* choice.

3.2.5.1.2 Inductive

Inductive reasoning does not rely so much on compelling proof (because in practice it is usually difficult to get everyone to agree on two or more premises) as it relies on the cumulative effect of many unquestionable facts. It draws generalizations from smaller observations.

Inductive reasoning can be well illustrated with the following example:

1. <u>No</u> green rabbit has <u>ever</u> been observed in nature.
2. <u>Therefore</u>, naturally green rabbits do not exist.

This line of reasoning draws its strength from the fact that humans, in their long history of observing rabbits, have never once observed a rabbit that is green in its natural form. The strength, it must be said, of inductive reasoning is not when the conclusion is stated as absolutely proven as it is when the conclusion is presented as being overwhelmingly *likely*. The argument about green rabbits is compelling because of the overwhelming evidence against the possibility of a green rabbit existing. A person can read this and say, "that only proves that a green rabbit has never been seen, not that it doesn't exist," and that person would be justified in saying so, but it is *overwhelmingly likely* that green rabbits do not exist.

3.2.5.2 Logical fallacies

Logic requires that the user or writer base his or her argument upon true and positive premises and observations. Otherwise, the argument may *seem* logical because it is built like a logical argument ought to be built, but it is flawed in its foundation. This is where logic can become very dangerous, and it is why logic must be used responsibly and ethically.

When a writer reasons from false premises and unproven "facts," he or she is committing a logical fallacy. Communicators have been collecting these fallacies for thousands of years. The following is a list of common logical fallacies, though not all of them nearly. There are literally hundreds.

- ***Ad hominem:*** attacking the arguer instead of the argument (***ethos***)
- **Appeal to emotion:** making emotion the foundation of an argument instead of reason (***pathos***)
- **Begging the question (*petitio principii*):** making the conclusion or assertion of an argument its own premise
- **False authority:** using only one authority, of usually dubious credentials (***ethos***), to support an argument
- **False dilemma:** implying that a reader has only two choices to make, when in reality there are many other options
- **Hasty generalization:** drawing a conclusion before it can be reasonably inferred (**induction**)
- **Red herring:** distracting a reader by introducing a separate issue from the issue at hand because the new issue is easier to speak to
- **"Slippery slope":** asserting that a small step will inevitably lead to worse, tenuously related consequences

3.2.6 "So what?"

The main difference between academic writing and conversational argument is the teacher's role in it: the teacher is there to require that a student ask him or herself why the conversation should be had to begin with. Many call this the "So what?" question.

A writer who consistently asks him or herself "so what?" while writing is taking an important consideration of readership.

3.2.7 Heuristics

It's also helpful, when formulating the question, to think of the anticipated answer – what *kind* of question is it?

For one, does the question imply a *perfect answer*? Many people go on arguing their point of view expecting to fix an unfixable problem. Take the question "What should we have for dinner?" as an example. Many ask this question anticipating the "right" or perfect answer when there really is none. This is where *perspective* is important because one reply might be "It's just dinner."

Think also of Cicero's four questions: **definition**, **conjecture**, **quality**, and **policy**.

- **Definition** asks questions about the meaning of a <u>thing</u>. ("How can we define <u>it</u>?" or less formally, "What is <u>it</u> exactly that we're talking about, anyway?")
- **Conjecture** asks questions about the existence or extent of a <u>thing</u>, in the past or in the future. ("Could <u>it</u> be considered?" "Was that really the way <u>it</u> happened?")
- **Quality** asks questions about a <u>thing</u>'s seriousness or severity. ("How serious is <u>it</u>?" "Do we really need to worry about <u>it</u>?")
- **Policy** asks questions about what should be done about a <u>thing</u>. ("Should <u>it</u> be submitted to some formal procedure?" "Do we need to act on <u>this</u>?" "How do we need to handle <u>it</u>?")

Think of small changes that make significant differences in your question. Consider the difference between the words *could* and *should* as one example. The question "Should I return this to the store?" implies something very different from "Could I return this to the store?" The first question implies *quality* – would it be a good thing to do? – while the second implies capability and conjecture. Likewise, the word *would* does something different, but similar.

Also consider the difference between *should* and *is*. "Is there a policy for this?" anticipates a yes or no, *non-debatable* answer, while "Should there be a policy for this?" implies more than one answer and a question of *policy*.

Many have problems with academic writing when they really shouldn't. As we see above, most people have the necessary basic skills to do so – and to do so very effectively. Using the methods above, it can be accomplished easily, when done in the right frame of mind.

The problem is that most people tend to overthink an academic assignment. They generally know what they want to write, but not what they want to say about it.

Take steroid usage in Major League Baseball, from the previous example. Many students want to write on that topic. First of all, most want to say that steroids are a problem, that something should be done about them, and that it is unfair or harmful to the game of baseball and to the players themselves; and those people have little more to say beyond that. When applying the methods described above, a student can find new things to say.

For one, it is helpful to understand what question the writer is answering. That answer is a vague answer to a vague question. Probably it is something like "What is your opinion on steroids in baseball?" It implies a perfect answer because there is only one way to answer it ("*your* opinion"). In reality, the subject is obviously far more difficult and complex than that, and to think otherwise is to oversimplify the issue.

Secondly, if Cicero's questions are applied, there are many directions in which a writer can go:

- **Definition:** "What do we mean when we say *steroids* anyway?" "Which steroids are the harmful ones?" "What do we mean by *sportsmanship*?"
- **Conjecture:** "*Are* steroids harmful to baseball?" "Is steroid usage poor sportsmanship?"
- **Quality:** "How serious *is* the steroid problem?" "Is it serious *enough*?" "With regard to sportsmanship, are steroids significantly *worse* than gambling, corking bats, sharpening spikes, spitballs, etc.?" "What would be the best way to handle it?" "What's the best way to *manage* it?"
- **Policy:** "What *should* we do about steroids in baseball?" "How should we handle violators of the steroid usage rules?" "How should we test players for steroids?"

3.3 Arrangement

Arrangement, or sometimes **Organization**, is the phase of the writing process when a writer takes into consideration the order in which he or she places the details of an essay.

3.3.1 The modes of development

One way to think of arrangement is along the lines of the **modes** of development. These are a generalized *way* of approaching a **topic** or an **issue**. It should be remembered that an essay does not necessarily follow only one mode, and the way an idea should be **developed** does not have to follow these modes in a rigid way.

If some of these modes sound a good bit like the **heuristics** from the previous section, that is because they really are very much like the heuristics from the previous section. Also, note that there is a complement to this section in **Section 2.2.2**, "Types of essays and activities in ENGL 1101."

3.3.1.1 Cause and effect

Whenever a writer holds a thing or idea or action alongside another for the purpose of establishing the idea that one thing caused another to happen, then the writer is working in the *cause and effect* mode.

3.3.1.2 Classification/Division

Whenever a writer examines a thing or idea or action by some standard or criteria, for the purpose of determining how well that thing or idea or action meets that standard or criteria, then the writer is working in the *classification/division* mode.

This mode is best identified when the circumstance requires a writer to describe a subject in **superlative** or **comparative** terms: key words like "best" or "better," "appropriate" or "most," etc., are usually a good indication that the writer is required to write in this mode.

3.3.1.3 Comparison and contrast

Whenever a writer holds one thing or idea or action alongside another for the purpose of pointing out something **meaningful** about it, either by pointing out the similarities or the differences (or perhaps both), then the writer is working in the *compare and contrast* mode.

3.3.1.4 Definition

Whenever a writer examines a thing for the purpose of understanding what it "really is," or perhaps of how it should be categorized, then the writer is working in the *definition* mode.

3.3.1.5 Description

Whenever a writer examines a thing for the purpose of understanding it by using one or more of the five senses (a sixth sense, second sight, and women's intuition don't count), then the writer is working in the *description* mode.

Description can be difficult to distinguish from *definition*. The key difference is that description is based in the practical (how a thing looks, sounds, tastes, smells, and feels like), whereas definition is based in the abstract (how a thing is or should be understood).

3.3.1.6 Narration

Whenever a writer describes a sequence of events, for the purpose of helping readers understand what has happened, then the writer is working in the *narration* mode.

Narration is one that can look a lot like *cause and effect*, and there is no reason why the two must be mutually exclusive: it might be that a writer is writing in both modes.

3.3.1.7 Process

Whenever a writer describes a sequence of events, for the purpose of helping readers how something happens or how it is done habitually, then the writer is working in the *process* mode.

Process is very like *narration*, in that it is the description of an event-sequence, but process often has a more technical or scientific context to it – it does not involve the development of “characters” and their agendas in a personal way. A good way of thinking of the difference between narration and process is to remember that *narration* involves the telling of a story, and *process* is something more like a lab report or a set of assembly instructions for a baby bed.

In truth, a better term for it might be “pattern description.” Again, there is no reason why an essay cannot be a hybrid of several modes.

3.3.2 Functional arrangement

Another way to think of arrangement is through *functional arrangement*. This involves the careful consideration of a reader’s needs to make him or her most receptive to your argument – whether it is to convince the reader to accept your opinion or to convince the reader that you know something or how to do something.

Functional arrangement, then, involves careful consideration of what information will be presented at what point in the essay. Also, it means thinking carefully about what information needs to be given in what order.

3.4 Extrinsics

Normally this section would be called “**Research**,” but research is only a part of a larger subject called extrinsics. **Extrinsics** are those details a writer uses to support an argument or observation that originally occur or occurred in some other context.

3.4.1 Research

Research is the work you do to find information to help you make your essay more effective. This topic is covered extensively in **Section 2.6**, so refer to that section for much more. In either case, *research* is the work a writer does to discover knowledge that he or she did not know beforehand or information that he or she did not discover independently.

3.4.2 Personal experience

In certain circumstances, personal experience is very like research. It depends only on the way the details are used. Personal experience is often used to support a point the same way that research is. In some ways, personal experience is like conducting research before you know that that is what you are doing.

There is a question, however, of whether or not personal experience is acceptable as an effective extrinsic detail. Very often it is not. It is usually best to clear it with your professor before you use personal experience as a supporting factor.

3.5 Composition

Composition is that phase of the writing process where a writer is writing that part of an essay that will be a part of the final product.

It does happen often that a writer composes something early on that ends up in the final version that he or she did not expect to be there at the beginning of the process.

3.6 Collaboration

Collaboration is that phase of the writing process where a writer consults with another person on the effective composition of an essay.

There is an important difference, however, between collaboration and **collusion**. Collusion means receiving excessive help from another to the point that a work can no longer be the product of a single author. Collusion is similar to collaboration, but it is instead a serious form of **academic dishonesty**.

3.7 Editing and proofreading

This is the phase of the writing process when a writer is addressing the **low-order concerns**. At this point, whenever during the writing process it occurs, the writer is dealing with issues that have less to do with what the essay is *about* and more to do with *how* it is written.

3.7.1 Editing

Editing is that phase of the writing process when a writer is making corrections and adjustments to any aspect of his or her writing – from the smallest comma issue to the largest content-related concern.

3.7.2 Proofreading

Proofreading is that phase of the writing process when a writer is making final corrections before the essay is submitted to be read. These will be the types of errors that a writer will simply miss during the regular part of the writing process – the errors a writer knows to avoid, but did not avoid for one reason or another. This requires a writer to step back from the "big picture," thinking less of what the essay is *about* and more of how the rules of grammar apply to what has been written.

In many ways proofreading can be the trickiest part of the writing process for some because, for example, if a writer expects a word to be somewhere because she *meant* to put it there, she likely will "see" the word there, but her reader won't. Some effective strategies for catching proofreading errors include

- reading the essay aloud, to approximate better the experience of a reader who is "hearing" the essay for the first time in his or her mind;
- having someone else do a "cold read," by seeing the essay for the first time and reading it back to the writer; and
- finishing the editing phase earlier than usual and then taking time shortly before the essay is due to look at it with "fresh eyes."

3.8 Colloquium courses (COLQ 2991, 2992, and 2993)

Among many other things, all that has been said in this section on Critical Thinking goes to establish the purpose and usefulness of critical thinking to the Area B requirement of the Core Curriculum. This Area requires students to choose from one of three courses (COLQ 2991, COLQ 2992, and COLQ 2993) that they believe best suits their career path. These colloquia involve the focus on some topic in one of three areas – Humanities, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, and Social Sciences, respectively. The idea behind it is that students would be presented with challenges to their critical thinking and asked to meet those challenges through strong argument. The benefit of this approach is that it enables students and teachers to narrow their focus.

4.0 Area C: Humanities and fine and performing arts

4.1 Theatre Arts

When students think of a theatre arts classroom, writing is probably not the first thing that they think of. However, theatre arts classes at Gordon State—especially Introduction to Theatre—involve a surprisingly significant amount of writing.

4.1.1 Introduction to Theatre and process-based writing

Although students' theatre arts professors may not necessarily collect their first drafts or wish to see their students' pre-writing activities (though professors might want to see these things), it is still a good idea to think about the steps involved in writing:

Reading ► Pre-Writing ► Drafting ► Revision ► Editing ► Submission

4.1.2 The types of writing assignments in Introduction to Theatre

Students in Introduction to Theatre classes should expect to write a variety of types of essays including a love song response, performance analysis, dramatic analysis, and playwriting project. Although these are somewhat different assignments, they share some basic goals. Students writing in Theatre Arts classes should expect relatively short assignments (generally three pages or fewer), but they should still attempt to get deeper and focus on the *why* and the *how*, not just the *what*.

4.1.2.1 The what, the why and the how of theatre writing

To a large extent, the what is the easy part. Statements such as: *The play is Hamlet*. *The play is two hours long*. *The play is enjoyable even for those without a familiarity with Shakespeare*. All of these simple statements are fine, but they won't help the student successfully complete the writing assignment.

To complete the assignment successfully, students need to consider the *why*. Why is the play *Hamlet*? Why is it two hours long? Why is it enjoyable? When the student answers those *why* questions, the essay at once becomes more memorable. Consider the following:

"Shakespeare's Hamlet *is an irresistible temptation for any company. In fact, it's been said that there's a production of* Hamlet *running somewhere on the planet twenty-four hours a day, three-hundred sixty-five days a year every year. In short, sooner or later Gordon State College would* have *to do* Hamlet."

"*The play clocks in at well over two hours; however, the fidgety shouldn't worry—crisp timing, unexpectedly silly comic scenes interspersed at regular intervals, and the*

occasional sword fight make Hamlet *fly by. In fact, I was shocked when the house lights went up for intermission."*

"In closing, if you love Shakespeare, go see Hamlet; *if you hate Shakespeare, see* Hamlet *anyway*. *The quick pace, comic buffoonery and Hollywood-style action will more than make up for the old-fashioned way they have of speaking."*

All of these three passages come to life because they were written with the *why* as well as the *what* in mind.

4.1.2.2 Love song analysis

In this writing assignment, students will focus only on the acting. Students pick one actor and focus on two or three key actor's moments in the play. Students should pick physical or vocal choices that the actor made and examine the way that those choices affect performance.

4.1.2.3 Performance analysis

In this writing assignment, the student acts as theatrical critic, sees some live theatre, and then composes a detailed review of the performance. Students should go beyond the mere judgmental, i.e., "I liked it," or "I did not like it." Students writing Intro to Theatre Performance Analysis assignments should delve deeper and talk about the *why* behind their opinions. Additionally, students should focus on all areas of theatrical performance; their papers should at least touch on the acting, the directing, and the design. Papers overly concerned with mere plot summary are rarely successful.

4.1.2.4 Dramatic analysis

This writing assignment can be explained as simply a performance analysis for a play that the student has not seen as yet. In a dramatic analysis, the student examines and picks out key moments of a play in its script form and then explains them in writing.

4.1.2.5 Playwriting project

Working alone, or with another student, this assignment asks the student to write a three minute to five minute play for the stage.

4.1.3 Writing skills developed in writing for Theatre Arts classes

Some of the writing skills developed in the Theatre Arts classes include critical thinking, support from the text, developing an ear for dialogue, creativity and **audience awareness.**

4.1.4 Pitfalls to avoid in writing for Theater Arts classes

Writing for the theater has its own set of pitfalls to be avoided. One of the most common pitfalls is to confuse **plot summary** with **analysis.** Many theatre arts professors will caution students to stay away from mere plot summary. Rarely will professors want copious amounts of plot summary. Most theatre arts professors want students to focus on analysis. Simply put, plot summary is *what* happens; analysis is *why* it happens.

4.2 The humanities

Humanities is a broad term; *Webster's* defines it as "the branches of learning (as philosophy, arts, or languages) that investigate human constructs and concerns as opposed to natural processes (as in physics or chemistry) and social relations (as in anthropology or economics)" ("Humanities"). Basically, if it has to do with "being human," a student might study about it in a Humanities class.

4.2.1 The humanities and writing

At Gordon State College, Humanities classes HUM 1501 and HUM 1502 are open to students who are taking Learning Support English classes. For that reason, writing demands in HUM 1501 and 1502 tend to be modest. Rarely will a Humanities professor assign long and complicated research papers or sophisticated argument assignments. Instead many GSC Humanities professors encourage their students to sally forth into the community and experience some of the art that is around them. A common assignment is the Cultural Event Report.

4.2.2 The cultural event report

Individual professors vary, of course, but this assignment often asks students to visit three or four outside events—concerts, plays, theatrical performances, etc.—and write a review of the events.

4.2.3 Humanities classes and process-based writing

Although humanities professors may not necessarily collect their students' first drafts or wish to see their students pre-writing activities (though professors might want to see these things), it is still a good idea to think about the steps involved in writing and think of Introduction to Humanities writing assignments in terms of the steps that this book has discussed previously

Reading ► Pre-Writing ► Drafting ► Revision ► Editing ► Submission

For Learning Support students taking Humanities classes, it is *particularly* important to think of writing as a process and, if it at all possible, to enlist the help of tutors from Gordon State College's Student Success Center before submitting their cultural event report for evaluation.

4.2.4 Writing skills developed by humanities classes

Some of the elements that separate a strong Cultural Event Report from weak one include depth, detail, and specificity. While many of us are quite comfortable giving our opinion, (“I liked it!” “I hated it!”), we can get tongue-tied when asked to go deeper and explain what about it *in particular* did we “like” or “hate.” Consider the two following passages:

“The play was kind of boring. I think that my Dad might have even dozed off during the second act.”

“The lack of action, the obscure references to nineteenth-century Italian politics, the poor pacing (I am not sure the actors know their lines), and uncomfortable metal chairs make One Italy! *a trying and tedious night at the theater.”*

Both passages essentially state the same thing—that the play is boring. But the second passage provides *reasons* for the conclusion. What makes the writer say that the play was boring? He or she has four reasons: no action, obscure references, poor pacing and uncomfortable chairs.

4.2.5 Pitfalls to be avoided in writing for Humanities classes

Some of the pitfalls in humanities writing include, lack of specificity, getting a late start and failure to take adequate notes.

“Start early” is advice students often hear and often ignore. But in case of the Humanities class cultural event report, ignoring that advice could have dire consequences. This project involves seeing outside events and all the details that come along with seeing events—purchasing tickets, arranging schedules, transportation, and parking—waiting to begin can put the student hopelessly behind. Students should schedule their events so that they have completed their viewing with two full weeks to write and revise the cultural event report.

Of course, getting an early start is useless if the student writer does not take advantage of it by taking specific notes at the performance. “I don’t have to write it down; I can remember it” –we have all said that at least once and we have usually been proved wrong. Students should be sure to attend their cultural events with a small notebook and something to write with. Even though taking notes in a semi-darkened theater can be challenging, students should avoid the temptation to illuminate their notes through use of their cell phones: such behavior is considered very rude.

Since depth and detail is something to be praised in effective humanities writing in, it is not surprising that a *lack* of specificity can ruin a cultural event report. The student should avoid making a pronouncement without explaining *why* he or she has come to that conclusion. If, for example, the student writer wants to state that the play’s costuming seemed neglected, then he or she should provide a reason for that

contention; for example*: "the play's costuming was spotty at best: to the best of my knowledge no one in fifteenth-century Verona wore Air Jordans."*

4.3 Music

Although there is probably little formal writing expected in an advanced cello class, Music Appreciation students can expect to do significant writing. Although individual instructors have varying expectations, it is safe to say that much Music Appreciation writing takes the form of either performance critiques or composer biographies.

4.3.1 Music and writing

At Gordon State College, Music Appreciation classes are open to students who are taking Learning Support English classes. For that reason, writing demands in Music Appreciation tend to be modest and instructors tend to be forgiving of one or two minor usage mistakes in a paper. Rarely will a music professor assign long, complicated research papers or sophisticated argument assignments. However, most GSC music professors encourage their students to sojourn into the community and experience some of the art that is around them. Common assignments include the performance critique.

4.3.2 Purpose of music writing

Writing about music serves a myriad of purposes: to demonstrate mastery, to aid in evaluation, but perhaps writing about music serves no more important function than to make improve our listening skills. Indeed, it seems clear that by listening closely, processing, and then writing about the experience we become better audience members and are able to experience music on a deeper and more enjoyable level.

4.3.3 Music and process based writing

Although the professor may not mention process-based writing, it is still a good idea to keep the sequence in mind when preparing for a music class writing assignment.

Reading ► Pre-Writing ► Drafting ► Revision ► Editing ► Submission

4.3.4 Writing skills developed in music appreciation classes

Both the performance critique assignment and the composer biography assignment place great value on the following attributes: critical thinking, specificity, and appropriate use of discipline-specific terminology.

4.4 English 2111, 2112, 2121, 2122, 2131, 2133

These classes, representing World Literature 1 and 2, English Literature 1 and 2 and American Literature 1 and 2 are all literary-survey classes. Since they share many

common facets, they will be discussed as a group. They are the last English class many students will take, all look at the literature of one area and period. The classes move quickly and provide a broad over-view of the "best and the brightest" literatures these cultures presented. For our purposes, we will refer to them collectively as "English 2*** ".

4.4.1 English 2*** and process-based writing

Just like as is English 1101 and English 1102, Gordon State College faculty teaching English 2*** faculty are interested in the finished product, but also in the steps—or process—a student writer has taken to create that piece of work. Regardless of whether or not the English 2*** professor insists on seeing evidence of those steps, he or she still expects the steps to be taken. The same steps that serve the student writer in English 1101 and English 1102—reading, pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, and submission—will be needed for successful completion of English 2***.

4.4.2 Types of essays and activities in English 2***

Students in English 2*** should expect to write a variety of papers including annotated bibliographies, expository research papers, arguments, persuasive papers, proposals, literary papers, evaluations, and rhetorical analysis papers. It is likely that students will write essays on their examinations as well. Students in English 2*** may or may not be called upon to complete an oral presentation.

4.4.2.1 Annotated bibliography

It can be easy to get an "annotated bibliography" assignment mixed up with a "works cited." The two do share some attributes –they both contain a list of MLA style resources used in a longer work—but there the similarities end. An annotated bibliography goes further and includes a summary of the work and sometimes an evaluation of the secondary source as well. Annotated bibliographies are often evaluated on the strength of their summaries and evaluations as well as the adherence to MLA form in the citations.

4.4.2.2 Literary analysis essay

Although this assignment is known by many different names, it usually involves tearing a work apart and looking closely at its key moments in hope to determine a "truth" about the literary work in question. This assignment can be done with or without use of secondary sources. One of the keys to successful completion of this assignment is to avoid an over-reliance on plot summary. One way to think about it is like this: plot summary is *what* happened in a work of literature. Literary analysis is concerned with *why* it happened. Another way to look at the literary analysis essay is that it seeks to determine how a given piece of literature *works*.

4.4.2.3 Biographical essay

Like literary analysis, this assignment can go by many different names. This assignment is a research assignment that asks the student to learn about an author's (or a group of authors') lives and literary careers and then explain what the student learned to peers and professor. Often biographical essays are particularly successful when they find links between an author's life events and his or her literary output.

4.4.2.4 Bibliographic essay

One way to think about the bibliographic essay is as an expanded, literary annotated bibliography. The student writer gathers a group of secondary sources all relating to one work or the work of one author. The student summarizes the secondary sources and then creates an essay discussing the central themes or ranges of this criticism. In some ways a bibliographic essay is like the opening sections of a researched literary analysis essay where the student writer discusses prevailing critical opinions on the work in question.

4.4.2.5 Compare and contrast essay

This deceptively simple essay asks the student writer to find both similarities and differences between two different works (or between the collected works of two different authors). Like the literary analysis, this essay can be done with outside sources making it a research essay, or without secondary sources. Many instructors want the student to go beyond mere list making of similarities and differences and contextualize or comment upon those similarities and differences in the essay's conclusion.

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4.4.2.6 Evaluation essay

Evaluation essays usually seek to judge something's value or worth. Writers can (and do) evaluate anything: works of literature, methods of completing tasks, television shows, and restaurants are some of the categories that lend themselves to evaluation essays. Writers of evaluation essays will set criteria, collect evidence, and render judgment.

4.4.2.7 Essay examinations

Many Gordon State College English professors will ask essay exam questions as part or all of a student's midterm or final examination. Essay examinations can be challenging, but by following some hints before and during the exam, students can succeed.

4.4.2.7.1 Essay examination strategies-- before the examination

Some students might say that there is absolutely no way to prepare for an essay examination. That is not true. A week or more before the essay examination students should be thinking of possible topics. It is important at this stage to try to "think like a

professor," and ask not "what do I *hope* she asks on the exam?" but rather, "what do I *think* she will ask on the exam?" Students would also be wise to memorize one or two key quotations that they might use in their essay. Obviously, students should gather all necessary supplies well in advance of the examination: the morning of the exam is no time to scurrying around purchasing a blue book.

4.4.2.7.2 Essay examination strategies—during the examination

One of the most useful hints for successful exam writing is also one of the most obvious: read the question carefully. Students should read the question multiple times, even if they are relatively sure that they understand it at first. It is also a good idea to look for "keywords" that hint at how the professor is expecting the question to be answered. For example, "trace" is asking for a history while "describe" is asking for something quite different. "Convince" tells the student writer that an argument or persuasive essay is expected, and "define" should never be confused with "give an example of…".

Many writers consider it a good idea to wait and think about what they want to write before starting on an introduction—even in a timed essay situation. Students should develop an argumentative **thesis** and carefully pick examples from the text that illustrate their thesis. Budget time carefully: decide how much time should be allotted to each section of the essay and force yourself to move one. Students should also avoid **cherry picking** –the act of picking examples that illustrate one's thesis while ignoring all the examples that disprove the thesis. Students should also anticipate counter-arguments and head them off. Finally, essay examinations should include a **conclusion** that does more than merely repeat the thesis.

4.5 Writing skills further developed in English 2***

English 1101 sought to develop skills such as writing with depth and detail, specificity, audience awareness, proper citation and mechanical correctness. Those skills will be further augmented and enriched as the student moves through English 2***. For this reason, among others, it is required that students take English 2*** during after their successful completion of English 1101 with a grade of "C" or better.

4.5.1 New skills developed in English 2***

Participation in English 2*** will develop new skills such as critical thinking, research skills, synthesis, weighing evidence and judicious use of quotation.

4.5.2 English 2*** and critical thinking

To most of the GSC faculty, critical thinking is the process of objective analysis and evaluation of data to form a rational judgment. In this way, "**critical thinking**" differs from hunches, instinct, and one's "gut" reaction. If we are to determine what a literary

work “means,” we are going to have to reach that conclusion based on literary evidence, not hunches, guesses, or what we hope it means.

4.5.3 English 2*** and research

One effective way of gathering evidence to determine the meaning of a literary work is to go to the library and see what other readers have thought of the work through the years. Successful Completion of English 2*** allows the student to polish the research skills he or she developed in English 1101 and 1102. Familiar research resources such as Galileo and GIL will be used again. In English 2*** they will be joined by new resources such as J-Stor and Project Muse.

4.5.4 English 2*** and synthesis

Often students in the 2000-level English survey classes will have to synthesize—that is, “put together” a group of disparate and individual critical opinions to get some sort of idea of the “general” state of criticism regarding a particular text.

4.5.5 English 2*** and weighing evidence

One of the things a student in English 2*** will have to do is weigh evidence. Be able to differentiate between causation and correlation; that is, one thing happens and then another thing happens. But does that mean thing number two was caused by thing number one? Sometimes, sometimes not. Weighing evidence also means not ignoring evidence that tends to disprove one’s theory. Instead, meet that counter-evidence head on and account for it. Do not be afraid to bring up such evidence; if you do not do so, others will.

4.5.6 English 2*** and judicious use of quotation

A good English 2*** paper is more than just a group of quotes strung together. Good writers know that they should never quote unless there is something specific about the exact wording that needs to be preserved. Often, summary and paraphrase work just as well (even better) than quotation. Hard and fast rules about how much quotation is too much are hard to find, but many professors agree that rarely should a paper contain more than ten percent quotations.

4.6 Writing pitfalls in English 2***

Some of the danger areas in writing for English 2*** classes include relying on plot summary, cherry picking, stacking the deck and confirmation bias; a belief that any reading is an acceptable reading, and an over-reliance on quotation.

4.6.1 Plot summary

Students have been summarizing works of literature since at least the second grade or so. Perhaps that is the reason that they are so comfortable with summary. The problem is that professors on the college level are rarely looking for mere summary; they often want to go beyond "what" happens to "how" it happened or what it means. Summarizing when one has been asked to analyze will rarely yield a good grade.

4.6.2 Cherry picking, stacking the deck, and confirmation bias

When a student writer takes a theory and applies it to a work of literature, the first person he or she has to convince is his or herself. Sometimes that process is so successful that the writer is unable to see other points of view. That's when things like cherry picking or stacking the deck become a problem. Basically, these terms all refer to the same thing: an inability or a refusal to acknowledge any evidence that refutes one's thesis or contention. Experienced writers know not to fear evidence that counters their thesis, they account for it instead. Grappling with confirmation bias reminds us that it is probably better to do good, honorable literary work, to adjust our thesis, or even to abandon our previously-held position than to be "right."

4.6.3 Multiple readings = any reading?

Reader response criticism tells us that one text can account for multiple readings. Unfortunately, some students take that position and assume that it means a text can account for *any* reading—anything goes! That's simply not true. Readings have to be supported by the texts themselves. For example, *Hamlet* can support many disparate interpretations, but none of them involve space aliens or zombie attacks.

4.6.4 The quote happy student writer

As stated above, quotations should generally account for no more than ten percent of a student paper. Though few professors fail students if they submit a paper that is eleven percent quotations, when the paper is thirty, or forty, or even fifty percent quotations, professors tend to look at the paper as being padded and grade it accordingly. Adding more quotations is rarely the answer to a student writer's problems.

4.7 Works cited

"Humanities." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2015. Web. 21 Jun. 2015.

Area D: Mathematics and Natural Sciences

Introduction

While the natural sciences cover topics as varied as oscillating springs and beating hearts, writing in the sciences is done with the goal of supporting the process of scientific inquiry. This means that writing for science must communicate more than results but also include a clear description of how those results were arrived at. This discussion will usually include an explanation of the problem being considered, the methods used to collect and analyze data as well as the data itself and the conclusions that have been drawn. Finally, given the inductive nature of scientific inquiry, results and conclusions are reported with a certain level of reservation, avoiding claims that may not be fully supported by the data available.

5.1 A brief discussion of scientific methods of inquiry

Unlike philosophy or literature, which date back nearly as far as there are written records, traditional scientific inquiry, or the process of asking questions about the physical universe and seeking answers, has only become a fully realized process in the last five hundred years or so. While its roots extend back to the classical Greek natural philosophers and the development of the process can be traced through the great Arabic and Persian astronomers and mathematicians of the 10th and 11th centuries, it is only after the Renaissance begins to take hold that what we call scientific inquiry develops the characteristics that will define it as a separate approach to understanding the physical reality around us.

The first thing to understand regarding scientific inquiry is that it is concerned with the physical universe only. Science, for reasons to be explained shortly, is not equipped to deal with questions such as "What is right and wrong?", "What is beautiful?" or "Is there a God?" Thus, while scientific inquiry is a powerful tool in the arsenal of an investigator or thinker, it is limited in what it is able to address. The first mistake many novice writers make is to attempt to use scientific inquiry on questions that are not scientific. To avoid this error, ask the following question, "Is what I'm addressing primarily about the physical universe that can be observed and measured?" If the answer to that question is "no", then the writer is better served using another discipline's process of inquiry to consider the topic.

The second thing to understand is that scientific inquiry is always based on the foundation of observed phenomenon. Whether this is the careful observation of something in nature or the conducting of a designed experiment, all questions are addressed through the making of observations. These observations must be carefully controlled and the data they produce must be precisely recorded. Scientific researchers must take great pains to be precise in developing procedures for making observations that are rigorously followed in order for their data to be considered valid and reliable.

The third point to make is that the process isn't just a random one where the scientist just sort of looks around to see what's out there. All processes of inquiry are driven by the asking of questions and seeking out the answers in an organized way and science is no different. Usually in science, the question is developed from something called a hypothesis. A hypothesis is an idea or model of how a physical system works. It will allow the scientist to ask questions that will lead to testable predictions about the behavior of a physical system. While a hypothesis may be little more than an educated guess about the behavior of the system, it is usually developed from an understanding of similar types of systems. One way a prediction can be formed is in an "If…then…" structure, i.e. - If a system is set up like x, then y will occur, where prediction of the outcome, y, will be derived from the hypothesis. Since the scientist doesn't actually know what will take place, the prediction must be tested through observation.

A concrete example of this might be that a scientist has observed that when objects are released from rest near the surface of the Earth, they will fall towards the ground and that they will speed up while doing

so. This would be considered an established fact. However, let us say that the scientist is curious as to what an object released near the surface of the Moon would do. She might form a hypothesis that says that since gravity is what makes objects fall in the observed way on Earth and gravity is something found everywhere in the universe, gravity will act near the surface of the Moon. She would then make a prediction, “If an object is released near the surface of the Moon, then it will fall towards the surface while speeding up just like it does on the Earth.” Note, the prediction flows directly from the premises of the hypothesis, i.e.-that there is something called gravity, that gravity acts everywhere the same way as it does on the Earth and, therefore, that it will act on objects near the surface of the Moon. Additionally, note that the prediction is testable by anyone who can go to the Moon.

When an observation confirms a prediction to be correct, the hypothesis is thought to be valid in that case. It is then broadened to include new physical situations and again tested. If the prediction is shown to be false, the hypothesis is either modified to take the new data into account or discarded completely. This will continue in a cyclical process until the hypothesis explains all known physical occurrences of a phenomenon or it falls. For this process to work, it is absolutely vital that all hypotheses be testable in such a way that a false result could occur. If a hypothesis is stated in such a way that it could not be potentially falsified through observation, it is not considered scientific. This is why science can’t address questions outside of those directly associated with the physical universe. For example, there is no way to conclusively determine whether or not a certain type of style of painting is or is not art through examining the physical aspects of the painting. A scientist can’t devise a physical test that could show that a given painting definitively lacks artistic merit or value.

In the example above, when the experiment was performed by the Apollo mission astronauts, it was found that objects do indeed fall towards the surface of the Moon when released from rest. However, they do not fall in exactly the same way as they do on the Earth. While they do speed up as they fall, they only fall at one-sixth the rate of acceleration as they do here in the Earth. This means that while the scientist’s hypothesis is partially correct, it is in need of some modification. She may do this by saying something like while gravity is found everywhere; its strength depends on the size and mass of the largest object. Since the Moon is smaller and less massive than the Earth, the strength of gravity will be less. This would then lead here to revise her predictions to say that rate of acceleration depends on the size and mass of the world the object is dropped on.

Finally, scientific inquiry has built into it the requirement of reproducibility. For an observation and its resulting conclusions to be considered scientific, they must be able to be reproduced by other scientists who possess the equipment and knowledge required to make a given observation. It is expected that all results will be checked by other researchers for accuracy and validity. While this process makes the progress of science seem maddeningly slow at times, it has two benefits. The first is that when results are reproduced, there is an increase in the scientific community’s confidence in the information. The second is that reliance on authority is undermined, thus avoiding the emergence of scientific dogma. Just because a famous researcher (as opposed to a newcomer or a scientist that is relatively unknown) makes an observation and draws a conclusion from it doesn’t exempt that result from verification by other scientists.

Through the use of this method, humanity has achieved a startlingly broad and deep understanding of the physical universe. While this understanding has allowed for the development of amazing technologies and solved a number of problems once thought to lie in the realm of the supernatural, practitioners of science need to realize that accepted hypotheses are always open to revision as new data is collected and new relationships are discovered. Science, as an inductive process, must always remain open to new information and the change in understanding that accompanies it.

5.2 The purpose of scientific writing

How one writes has as much to do with the audience that will be reading the communication as it does with the subject matter. In science, the writer generally will have three possible audiences. The first could be other scientists doing research in the field that the piece of writing is about. This group of readers will be interested in looking for the specifics of the work being discussed so that they can evaluate it and, if needed, replicate the observations and confirm the results. A second group of readers would be those who have a solid understanding of the field being discussed but who are not actively participating in the scholarly conversation about the research. These readers will be familiar with the vocabulary of the topic but will not be interested in all the data or details. They are interested in understanding how the conclusions affect the scientific community's understanding of the subject. Finally, the last audience will be those who have a limited knowledge of the subject matter and are reading the communication in order to learn more about the topic. Writing for this group will require the most explanation while leaving out most of the specific detail about the data and methods used.

5.2.1 Discipline-specific communication

The purpose of research oriented scientific writing is fairly straightforward: to communicate the process of scientific inquiry with the necessary clarity so that another researcher can replicate any observations, compare data gathered and assess any conclusions the scientist may have drawn. This form of communication will be from scientist to scientist and will often use language that is known only those familiar with the specific field study. In other words, this will be specialist communicating with specialist with all the accompanying jargon that is assumed to be understood by the audience. Thus the focus of the writing will be on presenting observations or ideas in great detail and with precision. In these cases, the emphasis of the writing is not in explaining terms or ideas that are well understood within the discipline being discussed, but in clearly describing the question being considered, discussing previous relevant work on the question (with appropriate citations, of course!) and presenting the scientific work that has been done. This includes methods and apparatus used, data gathered, analysis done and conclusions drawn.

5.2.2 Scientific communication for an educated audience

A second level of scientific writing is when a researcher needs to communicate with an audience that is not involved in the active research community. In this case, the purpose of the writing will change from detailing exactly how a conclusion was arrived at through observation or reasoning to a more general approach of discussing the broad outlines of method and moving to results. In this case, it may not be assumed that the reader will understand the discipline specific language or mathematics. In such cases, the writer will want to consider using descriptive models, metaphors and examples along with clearly worded definitions to explain what is meant in helping the reader understand key ideas or concepts. The goal is still to communicate the work that has been done by the researcher but to do it in a way that is accessible to all interested parties.

5.2.3 Scientific communication for a novice audience

For writers who aren't scientists themselves, it is important that the writer communicate that they did not do the research but instead that they are attempting to summarize and explain it to the reader. The purpose of the writing is to communicate the methods, data and conclusions of others and to explain them to an audience in a way that is understandable. As such, it is usually not necessary to include each specific piece of data or each small detail of the method. It is usually sufficient to describe broad outlines of the methods used to gather the data and the relationships the data reveal in order to draw the

conclusions and insights that will be explained. Again, as in the case above, it will help to use models, definitions, metaphors and examples but the writer should take extra care to make sure these are appropriate and accurate as it is surprisingly easy to introduce misconceptions into the reader's understanding of the material. In many cases, the writer will be composing a broader survey of the research and developments in a field of study and thus will be taking information from a number of sources and synthesizing them. This process takes time and usually requires the writer to gain a sufficient mastery of the material that they can see how each piece fits together in the larger puzzle.

As with all writing, the process of communicating ideas and information clearly takes time and requires a process that, like the process of scientific inquiry, is cyclical. Time is required to research, draft, do more research, revise, conduct even more research, revise again, edit and polish. Far too often students attempt to produce scientific writing in too short of a time frame which leads to inaccuracies and misconceptions in material that is too shallow to be of any real benefit to the reader.

5.3 How do you know?

In science it's not enough to know something, it is equally important to understand how something is known. Scientific knowledge is diminished in the absence of understanding the method of discovery. When communicating in science it is therefore just as important to discuss the process in which conclusions were arrived at. The writer needs to explain the methodology used to produce data and how the data was analyzed in order to provide the appropriate context in which to understand the results. Just telling the reader that something should now be held to be true without describing the path through which that conclusion was reached violates the spirit of science that all parties should be able to check the conclusions by reproducing the results.

5.3.1 Explanation of method

The audience of the communication will determine the level of detail which is included in the discussion of method. When writing of results to a scientific audience it is important to be very specific as to the equipment used as the way in which it was employed to take data. If a PASCO model 8345 Digital Thermometer was used to make a measurement, then the specific model number as well as its operational range and error tolerances needs to be included in the description. If the thermometer is calibrated a certain way, the calibration description must also be included, along with any other details of the measurement protocol. The discussion must be precise and detailed enough that the data taking procedure can be replicated from the description by another researcher.

When writing to an audience that is more concerned with the contents of the results than reproducing them, the writer may safely omit some details regarding the equipment and procedure but should still take pains to make sure the reader understands what has been done to produce the data. In this case, since the reader may not be a researcher in the field being discussed, it may be necessary to describe certain apparatus in order to understand the data. An example might be if an experiment used a cathode ray tube, it would likely be prudent to explain that a cathode ray tube was a vessel made from glass with positively and negatively charged metal electrodes at either end in which all of the air had been removed. In these cases, there is great wisdom in the adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words". A picture, figure or diagram of the apparatus with an explanatory caption will usually go a long ways to helping the reader understand what was done to collect the data.

5.3.2 Presentation of data

As in the case of the explanation of method, presentation of the data depends on the audience. For scientific papers all data should be presented first in raw form, usually using a table. This way another

researcher could conceivably check their data directly against what has already gathered. If these data are large in quantity, they will often be included in an appendix to the writing in order to not break up the flow of the communication. In this case, a small sample of the data will be included in the body of the writing so that the reader can see what it looks like for later reference.

The usual way of presenting data is in some analyzed form. The most basic way to do this is produce a graph of the data. When doing this, it is important to describe the type of graph and what it represents both in the body of the text as well as in a caption for the figure. All figures should include a distinctive label such as, Figure 2.1: Population as a function of time for catfish in a salinated test pond. Such conventions help the reader keep track of what they are looking at which is especially important as figures will not always be directly adjacent to the relevant text in a paper or report. This includes figures used to help describe methods as discussed above. Graphs should include clear labels for their axes that contain units of measurement.

5.3.3 Analysis

Once the data is presented, the next step is to present or describe the analysis done to the data. In cases where writing is being done for a scientific audience, all calculations should be described with a sample calculation included for clarity. If the method of calculation is not obvious or part of the general accepted practice of a discipline (as in the case of calculating the slope of a line on a graph), the equation used for the calculation should be derived from known principles. This is usually done in the section of the communication that describes the methods used.

For more general readers, it is more useful to directly point out relationships between physical quantities from the data. This is usually done by graphing the data and then using a mathematical tool such as a best fit line to illustrate the relationship between the two physical quantities represented on the axes of the graph. The point of the writing for this section is to describe and explain these relationships at the reader's level.

5.3.4 Drawing conclusions

Drawing conclusions in science is done with great care and reserve. While the data may show a clear relationship between a given set of physical variables, they only do this in the particular case that has been studied or tested. Generalizing these results should be done cautiously and only when the researcher is certain that changing the system being studied will not significantly change the outcome of the experience.

When describing the conclusions drawn by other researchers, the writer should be careful to explain how the conclusion was reached through analysis of the data. It may not be obvious to the reader that a specific conclusion can be drawn inherently from the data and thus the writer should take the time to make the connections from data through relationships to conclusions. It is important that the writer not draw additional conclusions that the researcher did not, usually through overgeneralization, unless additional work has been done by other researchers that broaden the scope of the result. An example of this would be to cite a study that demonstrated that in a group of 10,000 subjects, those who ate more broccoli had a lower incidence of colon cancer and then generalizing this to say that dark green vegetables prevent all cancers. This sort of error is made frequently in general science writing by journalists and can do great harm in shaping public discussion of scientific issues.

5.4 Using precise language, or the importance of picking the right word

Science is a precise discipline in its use of language. Scientific disciplines have very specific terms that they use to describe physical quantities and systems. While these words may be the same as words used in everyday language, they may mean very different things. An excellent example of this is the word “work”. In everyday language work generally means to exert or apply an effort to a task. The discipline of physics, however, has a very precise definition of the term that involves pushing or pulling an object in such a way that the object moves in the direction of the push or pull. While this may seem similar, it should be noted that if the object does not move, no “work” is done according to the physics definition. Similar issues arise when words like momentum, gravity and energy are used without care being taken to make sure the correct word is being used to describe a specific scientific idea.

This brings up the issue that many student writers run into when writing scientifically: the imprecise use of scientific language. Many a student has complained to a professor that a paper or lab was unfairly graded when the professor deducts points for an incorrect word or phrase. In frustration, the student will vent saying, “The professor only wants me to use the exact word they used…” While it is true that the professor wants only a specific word used in a given context, this is because that is the only word that correctly describes the idea or concept being used. In other words, while two words may be synonymous in everyday vernacular, they may have important differences in meaning in a scientific context.

Finally, there are occasions where an everyday word can describe an entire set of concepts without being specific enough to convey what is meant in sufficient detail. The word gravity is a common example of this. While the word “gravity” may convey the general sense of being held to the surface of the Earth, it doesn’t distinguish between the idea of a gravitational force, an acceleration of gravity, Newton’s Universal Law of Gravitation or Einstein’s description of gravity as part of his General Theory of Relativity. While using gravity is broadly correct, it lacks the specificity to communicate what is really meant.

One way to avoid both of these errors is to fully describe an idea in an early draft of a paper or lab report. Once the idea is in the draft, the author can then determine what the correct and precise term is and either replace the description with the appropriate term or, in the case of writing for a non-scientific audience, associate the term with the full description in the first instance and then use the term exclusively thereafter. In any case, the writer must resist the tendency to use synonyms to add variety to the communication. While this is admirable in certain types of literature, it can easily destroy the effectiveness of a scientific writing.

5.6 The article summary

One common task of scientific writing is that of the article summary. In this type of assignment, the writer is asked to read and then summarize the important points of one or more articles for an audience. This is a task that is commonly assigned in work groups to help everyone in the group keep up with the latest thinking and research in a field. Another common use of this is in business where workers will summarize scientific information for the managers or executives they work for in order to help the managers make decisions.

5.6.1 What is the purpose?

The purpose of this writing is to present the key details of the article in relationship to a broader context so that the recipients can understand the major points of what has been done and why it matters. This will allow the reader to quickly familiarize themselves with the research that has been done and then make a decision as to whether it warrants further study. As such, it is important that the writer not merely regurgitate the material already found in the article but distill it down to the most important points. This process of analysis places the burden of understanding the entire article clearly on the writer (which is

why professors give this sort of assignment to their students). Only this deep level of comprehension will allow the writer to correctly assess what are the core ideas and processes described in the article and then present them succinctly.

5.6.2 Analysis of content

One way a student might organize their thinking and analysis is to ask and answer a series of questions about the article being reviewed: What is the main point of the article? How did the author of the article arrive at their conclusions? Why are these results important? How does this information relate to other things being done in the context of the subject or discipline? In developing the answers to these questions, the student is forced to do the in-depth analysis and synthesis necessary to write a truly helpful summary.

When reviewing articles published in scientific journals, it is important to understand the previous work the author is drawing from. This may mean that the summarizer may need to go back and read additional material referenced in the paper. An example might be if the article's author references that they used a specific method to do gene sequencing that is not commonly used in the discipline, the description of that method will need to be found and understood. This reference should be cited in the text of the summary so that the reader can reference it.

When reviewing articles for a more general audience, the author of the article will have done much of the summarizing of methods and data already. In these cases, it is more important to focus on the key conclusions and what they mean. Additionally, the relationship of these conclusions to the broader discipline becomes an important consideration as they will help the reader place the information within the disciplinary framework. Taking time to understand how the conclusions fit into the "big picture" will go a long ways to helping the writer develop a thesis and outline for the communication.

5.6.3 Communication of key ideas and relationships

In summarizing the article the overriding dictate is "clarity in brevity." While a good writer always strives to explain things using as few words as needed, this is especially true in article reviews. Remember that the point of the exercise is to reduce the work of the person reading the summary so that they can make a decision as to whether to pursue the information further. Balancing this, however, is the requirement that the information of the original article is presented accurately.

Thus, it is not necessary for the summary to explain every detail of the data taking or analysis. What is required is enough information on these portions of the article to support the conclusions drawn by the original author. Additionally, strengths and limitations of the conclusions should be discussed only in the context of the original article and that of the specific discipline the article addresses. Finally, relationships between the article and other relevant work that has been done should be noted when appropriate. This is especially true if the results of the work being summarized are surprising or contradictory to either previous ideas or research.

While the structure of the article summary will be dictated by the individual professor assigning the work, the writer may develop an outline for the communication using the questions developed for the analysis of the article. A logical and organized order to the questions will lead to a logical and organized summary consisting of answers to questions in the readers' minds (whether the questions are explicitly stated or not). One guideline to follow is to place the most important thing to be communicated (known in journalism as "The Lead") in the first sentence or two of the summary. An example of this might be something like this:

> "In their paper titled, 'Georgia Bats and Their Habitat,' authors Binder and Hartman assert that greater levels of urban development are causing marked changes in the distribution of native species. Bat species once found only in mountainous climates of north Georgia are now being observed as far south as Macon in high rise structures such as church towers and multistory buildings."

Note that the main conclusion of the article is found in the first two sentences of the summary. A brief summary of methods can follow this but the lead lets the reader know what the outcome of the research was quickly so that they place all of the other information in the summary within that context.

5.10 Mathematics

On first glance, students might think that this is a misprint. Why would a guide to writing need a section on mathematics? But in fact, there is a sizable amount of writing in Gordon State College mathematics classes—more than many students would imagine. Furthermore, the skills necessary to write well in lower mathematics classes differ from the skills fostered in upper division mathematics classes.

5.10.1 Writing skills fostered in general mathematics classes (MATH 2501 and lower)

Lower-level mathematics classes look to foster five key attributes in writing. Successful writers in 1000- and 2000-level mathematics classes will be able to demonstrate writing marked by: originality, precision, clarity, brevity, and accuracy.

5.10.1.1 Originality

Students in 1000- and 2000-level mathematics classes should go beyond what the "book says" and answer the questions that they are presented with in their own words and in their own way. That way, students demonstrate that they have internalized the concept. Rarely, if ever, will a mathematics professor ask students to copy a line or phrase from the textbook *verbatim*. If students find themselves merely parroting back what is in the book, then they should stop and re-read the question.

5.10.1.2 Precision

In mathematics classes "almost" or "kind of" understanding is not enough; student writing needs to demonstrate an *exact* mastery of the concept involved.

5.10.1.3 Clarity

Although in literature a writer might occasionally see the benefit of having a story with an indeterminate ending, there's absolutely no place for vague writing in the world of mathematics. Clarity is of paramount importance. Of course, clear writing needs to come from clear thinking.

5.10.1.4 Brevity

The importance of brevity marks another key difference between writing for mathematics classes and writing for English classes. In English classes, a student writer might want to leisurely begin an essay with a memorable quotation or short anecdote, but in mathematics it is important to get to the point quickly. Mathematics professors encourage their students to state answers in such a way that they cannot be confused with any other answer and then move on. There is little reason to "beat about the bush" in mathematics writing.

5.10.2 Skills fostered in higher-level mathematics classes (MATH 3001 and higher)

Although the five attributes that are important in lower-level mathematics classes are still needed in upper-level classes, they all pale to one—clarity.

5.10.2.1 The importance of clarity in higher-level mathematics writing

Upper level college writing is marked by absolute and unfailing commitment to clarity. The student writer in an upper-division mathematics class should be prepared to sacrifice everything—even the niceties of grammar and usage, if necessary—to clarity. It is important that that sense of clarity be reader-based—that is, the writer should always be thinking "will this seem apparent to *my reader*?" not "does this seem clear to me?" Whether or not the concept or answer is clear to *the reader*—be that reader the instructor or another student—is always the benchmark that the student writer should keep in mind. For example, student writers in higher-level mathematics classes should not blanche at repeating their underlying assumptions when writing out a proof. Reminding the reader of the assumptions underlying the student writer's thinking is not repetitive in mathematics writing, because it helps with clarity.

5.10.2.2 Three pitfalls to avoid in higher-level mathematics writing

Definitions, **pronouns**, and the difference between *what, why, and how* are all sites of potential confusion in mathematics writings. Students should be aware that an example and a definition are two different things: they should not provide an example when a definition is asked for; nor should they provide a definition when an example is asked for. Students should also be aware of their use of **pronouns** and avoid problems with **vague pronoun referents**. (In some ways, **pronouns** are the natural enemy to clarity.) Finally, students writing on mathematics tests should be very cognizant of the difference between *what*, *why*, and *how.* Although those three words could *all* be used to begin a question on a mathematics test, they are asking for three very different answers and should never be used interchangeably.

6.0 Writing in Area E

Defined as the “scientific study of human society and social relationships” (“Social Sciences”), Social Sciences is the study of humankind’s workings in groups. At Gordon State College, the Social Sciences are composed of the departments of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Economics, Business, Psychology, and Sociology. Writing-based assignments form a considerable part of the work in the study of the Social Sciences.

6.1 Types of Area E writing assignments

While taking Area E classes, students will sharpen their writing skills while completing essay examinations, group projects, short papers, expository papers, and analyses and other assignments.

6.1.1 Essay examinations

One of the most common Area E writing venues is a test or examination. When faced with an essay examination question, students should read the question carefully, determine what exactly the question is asking, map out an answer, compose carefully, and leave time to proofread.

6.1.2 Group projects

Although some students enjoy working as a team, others vehemently dislike the concept of group work. Nevertheless, working as a part of a team is a “real world” skill that all students will need as they enter the working world after graduation. The challenges and rewards of group work are many. Students must strive to “bring something to the party,” that is, contribute in a meaningful way, without becoming the “Bossy Boots” who dominates every meeting and insists on micro-managing or controlling the process. A good group project is a gumbo pot of ideas and benefits from everyone’s input.

6.1.3 Short papers

A hallmark of Business/Accounting classes and a staple in other classes as well is the short paper (one-thousand to fifteen-hundred words, or about four or five pages). Students working on the short paper assignment should make certain that they understand the assignment thoroughly, start early on the project, see the professor or Student Success Center tutor for help if necessary and proofread their papers carefully.

6.1.4 Understanding the assignment: expository, analysis, and arguments

Regardless of whether the student is alone or working with a group, regardless of whether the paper is long or short, the student must be absolutely sure he or she knows what the assignment is asking and how the assignment is arranged. There are many

modes of writing in college, but three of the most common are: exposition, analysis, and argument.

6.1.4.1 Expository papers

Several decades ago, a popular TV police detective would chasten chatty crime witnesses with the request, “Just the facts, ma’am.” By that the detective, Sergeant Joe Friday, meant that he was not interested in hearing long digressions, opinions, or any other sort of “side” information. Though he did not use the term, what Sergeant Friday wanted was an *expository* tale—just the story of what happened—not *why* it happened, not a defense of choices made—just the facts. That is what an expository piece of writing does: it presents the appropriate facts to the reader. We read expository writing all the time—an encyclopedia article, most newspaper articles, or an automobile owner’s manual are all examples of expository writing.

6.1.5 Analysis papers

If an expository piece looks at the topic, an analysis essay pulls the topic apart and begins to look at its components one by one. Whereas an expository essay answers the question, “What is it?” an analysis essay asks, “How does it work?”. Analysis essays are concerned with things such as key moments, momentum changes, shifts, and root causes. An analysis of a football game might look closely at a key interception in the third quarter. An analysis of a presidential election might look at a candidate’s perceived failure in a debate or a mis-statement for which a candidate was ridiculed. Analysis of historical events, such as World War II, might conclude that the Allies were victorious in large part due to the United States’ superior industrial production.

6.1.6 Argumentative papers

An argumentative paper seeks to use reasons and evidence to change the mind of one who feels differently from the writer. Whereas expository writing is going to be mainly concerned with “just the facts,” argumentative writing is going to be filled with opinions—how those “facts” should be interpreted. It is important to remember that even though argumentative writing relies on opinions, those opinions need to be backed up by reliable reasons and concrete evidence.

6.1.7 Mode and topics

“Expository,” “analysis” and “argumentative” essays are all modes of writing—they’re “customary ways of doing something” (“Mode”). Modes shouldn’t be confused with **topics**. Topics are what the student writer is writing about; modes are how the student approaches the topic. A single topic can yield very different essays when its mode changes. For example, a student could write an *expository* paper about spring break options in the southeastern United States; a student could analyze all the various spring break options for things such as price of accommodations, number of students present, and nightlife options; or a student could argue that one particular destination is the

“perfect” spring break locale for the readership. Though the topic remains the same in all these essays, the essays themselves are very different as the mode changed.

Similarly, if a student were writing about World War II in a history class and had the topic “the Battle of Midway Island,” an expository essay (which simply tells the story of the battle) would look different from an analysis essay (which would look at the role of one or more key elements; say, “weather”), and they would both look very different from an argumentative essays, (which might argue that without a victory at Midway, the United States would have lost the war in Pacific to the Empire of Japan). One topic yields three very different essays.

6.2 Skills developed in writing for area e

Writing in Area E classes will help students cultivate a number of skills, including collaboration, careful reading, critical thinking, “owning” their own prose, developing a historical imagination, and following directions.

6.2.1 Collaboration

As mentioned above (see Section 6.1.2), a hallmark of many Business and Accounting classes is the group project. One of the skills that a group project will encourage is collaboration. In fact, “collaboration” is not a single skill; it involves a range of skills and practices: knowing when to speak and when to listen, active listening, tact, expanding on other’s ideas, patience, giving appropriate feedback, and supporting the group, among others. Being a good “team player” is one of the key attributes modern employers are looking for.

6.2.2 Careful reading

Being able to locate a text’s main idea, being able to differentiate between what is stated outright by a text and what is implied, and being able to comment effectively on a text’s style and an author’s tone are all part of reading college-level material effectively. Careful reading, sometimes known as “**active reading,**” is a vital piece in the student writer’s toolbox. In fact, many professors believe that a substantial percentage of students’ writing problems are actually reading problems in disguise. Area E assignments will give students ample opportunity to improve their reading skills.

6.2.3 Critical thinking

“Critical thinking” is a much bandied-about term. At the risk of over-simplification, critical thinking refers to the practice of basing conclusions on observable phenomenon and empirical observation. In this way, we can look at “critical thinking” as something that is almost diametrically opposed to “gut instinct” or “hunches.” Critical thinking is relentless in asking us questions such as, “*WHAT* makes you think so?” (For a more detailed discussion of **critical thinking**, see Section 3 of this work.)

6.2.4 “Owning” it

Sometimes students—especially struggling students—think of a research paper as if it were a quilt. Just as a quilt takes different fabric swatches and sews them together, some students think that they can take “swatches” of quotation and “sew” them together with appropriate documentation and transitions to make a research paper. In fact, a research paper needs to be much more than that. For starters, students must really understand the passages they are quoting—in short, the student writer must “own” the material he or she is using.

6.2.5 Developing a good historical imagination

One of the characteristics of good writing in the discipline of history is development of historical imagination. It is all well and good to know what the political leaders said or what the generals thought, but such information only tells part of the story. What would it have been like to be a soldier at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415? What would the battlefield have looked like? What sounds would the soldiers hear? What would it have smelled like? The ability to take oneself out of one’s own surroundings and imagine life in a completely different world is key to developing a strong historical imagination.

6.2.6 Following directions

Encouraging students to follow directions carefully is so obvious that it seems self-evident, and there seems little reason to include it in a text like this one. However, many professors report that failure to closely follow directions is responsible for many of the D’s and F’s students receive in Area E classes. A good tip is to re-examine the assignment sheet after a strong first draft has been executed. It is amazing how often students—even strong students—can “drift” away from the ostensible purpose of a given assignment and write something vastly different.

6.3 Pitfalls to be avoided in writing for Area E

Students should avoid compartmentalizing, vague writing, failing to address the question, writing with little evidence, confusing facts with opinions, confusing expository and analysis assignments, dumbing down complicated issues, and failing to take grammar, usage, and mechanical issues seriously when writing in Area E.

6.3.1 Compartmentalizing

For students who are struggling with various classes and adapting to various professors’ teaching styles, it is perhaps understandable to think that classes have little to do with one another. Assuming good writing practices are something only for English class is an example of this compartmentalizing. Rest assured, professors in Area E and the other areas as well care just as much about sound writing practice as English professors do.

6.3.2 Vague writing

Somewhere along the line, students got the idea that by holding back specifics and keeping their comments general, they could avoid making mistakes. The result has been a virtual epidemic of vague writing. For example, imagine a writing prompt such as, “describe the weather on last Tuesday.” If the student researched the prompt thoroughly, he or she could have replied, “Last Tuesday, the twenty-fourth, the weather was partly cloudy with a slight chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon and a high of eighty-eight degrees. The low temperature was sixty-four degrees.” A vague writer might settle for, “It was OK,” confident that the short and vague sentence contained no mistakes. Such a position might be free of mechanical error, but it is not a strong response to the question. For the record, *not* saying something—to most professors—is akin to saying something wrong.

6.3.3 Failure to completely address the question

Another similar problem is failure to completely answer the question. Writing, which is essentially the process of putting our non-linear thoughts into the linear shape of sentences and paragraphs, is vulnerable to “drift”—we start about writing about one issue and we “drift” into another. For example, a student could receive a prompt asking the how the completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1869 changed Americans’ perceptions about the frontier. The student could start with an introductory paragraph about a railway trip she took from Dallas to Santa Fe in 2012. Then instead of turning back to the Transcontinental Railway, she could talk about other memorable family vacations: Disney World in 2009, the Grand Canyon in 2011, New York in 2013. Such an essay might be interesting and might be well-written, but it would not answer the question very well. A good way to guard against this “drift” is to re-read the question or prompt *after* completing an initial draft.

6.3.4 Lack of evidence

The saying “everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion” is well-known. But the saying should not be interpreted to mean that all opinions should be given equal consideration. In fact, opinions based upon and supported by facts have to be given more weight than opinions based on whim. Area E writing assignments, like most other writing assignments in the academic world, will privilege writing that backs up its contentions with *evidence*—not just with the author’s say-so. For example, a student writer could contend, “Everyone knows that the most inexpensive place to buy gasoline in Barnesville is at the Ingles on Highway 41.” Such a thought is all well and good, but it is much more convincing when the student writer brings evidence to bear. Consider the following: “weekly collection of data indicates that the regular unleaded gasoline at the Ingles on Highway 41 averaged six cents a gallon less than its closest competitor between the period of February 12 and April 13, 2014.” Students in Area E classes should strive to support their contentions with evidence.

6.3.5 Differentiating between facts and opinions

We have become a nation of very opinionated people. What is more, we are strongly committed to our opinions. Sometimes, we are so committed to our opinions that we think of them as uncontestable; that is, we think of them of facts. Differentiating between facts and opinions is an important element in Area E writing assignments. One way to think about it is like this: opinions are *what* a person thinks, facts are *why* that person thinks that way. Facts tend to be those things that come from the library; therefore, they are verifiable and can be cited. If something's source is just you, then it is probably an opinion.

For example, "*Breaking Bad* was television's best show" is an opinion. "*Breaking Bad* has a user rating of 9.5 out of 10 possible according to Internet Movie Database" ("*Breaking Bad*") is a fact. *Breaking Bad* was nominated for one hundred ninety-two major industry awards and won one hundred eighteen of them, including Best Dramatic Series, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Actor" is another fact. The opinion (TV's best show) can rely on the facts (IMBd ratings, number of awards) for support.

Savvy students are aware of when writing assignments are asking for facts, when assignments are asking for opinions, and when assignments are asking for opinions backed up by facts.

6.3.6 Differentiating between narrative and analysis

Earlier in this work, the difference between expository writing and analysis was discussed (see Sections 6.1.4 and 6.1.5). To be successful in Area E, students should avoid confusing expository writing (or narration) with analysis. At the risk of over-simplification narrative asks, "What happened?". Analysis, on the other hand, asks, "Why did it happen?". Students should always differentiate between the two and plan their responses accordingly.

6.3.7 "Dumbing down"

A cousin to "Failure to completely answer the question" (see Section 6.3.3) "dumbing down" occurs when a student writer strips a complicated question of its nuance and fine distinctions in an effort to avoid mistakes. For example, an essay question such as "Describe in detail why Germany lost the Second World War" could be answered by something like "Germany lost the Second World War because it was unable to fight successfully on two fronts." This response might technically be correct, but would not be a very strong essay examination answer because it leaves much unsaid—American industrial output, Allied bombing of major German cities, ability of the Red Army to withstand unthinkable losses, Italy's early exit from the war, etc.

6.3.8 Grammar, mechanics, usage and the 'ten strike' rule

Sometimes students think that worrying over issues such as proper comma use, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun referents is something only for English 1101 and

English 1102. Such students are often very disappointed when their papers are returned splashed liberally with professorial red ink. For the record, grammar, mechanics, and usage “count” in Area E classes just as much as they do in English classes. How many errors are too many? That’s hard to say, but one Area E professor reports that he feels he cannot in good conscience pass any paper with more than ten serious mechanical errors. He calls this his “ten strike” rule.

6.4 Works Cited

“*Breaking Bad.*” *IMBd: The Internet Movie Database.* IMBd.com. April 2015.*Web*. 20 June 2015.

“Mode” Def. 3. *Merriam-Webster Online.* Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 24 July 2015.

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7.0 Writing in Area F

Area F refers to a student's major area. As Gordon State College now offers eleven baccalaureate degrees as well as dozens of transferrable associate-level areas of concentration, space limitations prevent full discussion of writing practices in each individual program. Instead, this work will take a close look at two of Gordon State College's most popular programs: Nursing and Health Sciences and Education.

7.1 Writing in Health Sciences

Whether students are part of the ASN program, the BSN program, or merely taking one of the required Health Sciences classes, writing and writing-related activities form a substantial portion of their curriculum.

7.2 Health and Wellness for Living and Physical Fitness for Life

Gordon State's two institutional requirement classes, Health and Wellness for Living and Physical Fitness for Life are both often taught without requiring students write a major research paper—though students should check with their individual professors as individual requirements can vary. Despite the lack of a research paper, writing plays an important part in these classes due to professors' reliance on short answer question on tests and examinations.

7.2.1 The short answer question on tests and examinations

A key element of health class test is the short answer prompt. Students should note that although the question calls for a "short" answer, it does not call for a vague or incomplete answer. Sometimes students approach the short answer prompt by haphazardly jotting down *anything* vaguely related to the topic in the slim hopes that something they write might address the prompt. Such a scattershot approach is grossly inefficient and often fails to bring about the desired result. Instead, students should focus on specificity and accuracy and tailor their responses to the prompt as written.

7.2.2 Definitions and examples

Professors in Health Sciences classes find it particularly vexing when their prompts ask for a definition and they receive an example from a student; or conversely, when the prompt asks for examples and the professor receives definitions. For example, if a prompt asked a student to "define the term *carcinogen*" and the student responded, "asbestos fibers," such an answer is *incorrect* and is unlikely to receive even partial credit. (Of course, if the prompt had asked the student writer to list an example of at least one suspected or known carcinogen, the matter might be different.)

7.2.3 Critical thinking and Health Sciences classes

Students should be sure to model the precepts of good critical thinking practices when composing their Health Science short answers. See Section 3 of this work for a detailed explanation of critical thinking, but basically critical thinking refers to the practice of supporting ones contentions with reasons and evidence—especially evidence in the form of observable and quantifiable data.

7.2.4 Scenario-based tests in Health Sciences classes

One venue for the Health Sciences student to demonstrate his or her critical thinking skills is with the scenario-based test. Scenario-based tests present a situation and ask the student to interpret what has happened, adapt to environmental factors, and apply what has been learned to a "real world" situation.

7.3 Writing in a Health Sciences Colloquium

Writing in a Health Sciences Colloquium, such as Global Health Perspectives, will offer new challenges for the student writer. Both the assignments given and the writing qualities looked for will differ from the writing done in Physical Fitness for Life or in Health and Wellness for Living classes. A key difference is the policy brief assignment.

7.3.1 Writing a Global Health Perspectives policy brief

The policy brief assignment asks the student to pretend that he or she is a public health official of a particular nation and has been asked to advise the nation's leaders regarding one health issue. For example, the student could work with "HIV-AIDS" as the health issue and "Senegal" as the nation. After careful research, the student would select a course of action for the government and then use the policy brief to convince the government to adopt the selected course of action.

7.3.2 Attributes of an effective Global Health Perspectives policy brief

A strong Global Health Perspectives policy brief will be convincing, well-researched, and succinct.

7.3.2.1 A convincing policy brief

Students writing the Global Health Perspectives policy brief should remember that at its heart, the policy brief is meant to convince someone (government officials) to do something (adopt a specific course of action). In this manner, the policy brief is not all that different from the argument or persuasion essay students write in English 1102.

7.3.2.2 A well-researched policy brief

Of course, readers are more likely to be convinced if writers use quality sources to back up their contentions. Students should avoid “just Googling it,” or infamously unreliable sources such as Wikipedia. Instead students should use reliable academic sources like *The Lancet*, The World Health Organization website, and the UNICEF website.

7.3.2.3 A succinct policy brief

“Succinct” is an often misunderstood term. It does not mean “short,” as many people seem to think; nor does it mean “vague.” According to *Meriam-Webster’s Dictionary*, “succinct” means “marked by compact precise expression without wasted words” (“Succinct”). So a succinct answer uses every word it needs to completely answer the question without any extraneous “fluff.” Being able to express complicated thoughts in a succinct manner is a vital skill for success in college and beyond.

7.4 Writing in the Nursing program

Strong communication skills are a vital asset to a successful nursing career; therefore, it is probably not surprising that writing forms a significant part of the study of nursing. In many ways, however, writing in the Nursing program is significantly different from writing in other areas of the curriculum.

7.4.1 Documentation

One key difference between writing in the Nursing program and writing in the Humanities is in the documentation system used. English, the Humanities, and much of the rest of the GSC community use MLA-style documentation. But MLA is far from the *only* documentation system in use throughout the academic world. In nursing, APA format is used. APA and MLA have a few similarities, but they also have many differences. For example, APA differs from MLA in the way that it privileges dates; the year is listed in *every* parenthetical reference. Such a difference is rooted in the very differences between the two disciplines: whereas a twenty-year old comment on *Hamlet* might still be useful, a twenty-year old idea on cancer prevention might well be considered ancient. Hence, the documentation system used in Nursing reflects the academic needs of those in the profession.

7.4.2 Writing in the ASN program and writing in the BSN program

Not only does writing for the Nursing program differ from writing in other programs on campus, but expectations in writing for the ASN program differs from the expectations students face when writing for the BSN program. In accordance with nationwide QSEN standard competencies, writing assignments in the ASN program are given to promote growth and are evaluated primarily on content; grades take a back seat to the student’s

academic growth. In the BSN program however, writing “counts” as part of a grade. The BSN program classes will feature a major written paper in every course.

7.5 Good writing in the Nursing program

Good nursing writers demonstrate proficiency in writing strong sentences, paragraphing, strong source selection practices and responsible use of sources.

7.5.1 Sentences

Strong writing—in the Nursing program or elsewhere—is built on a bedrock complete sentences. Nothing marks a neophyte writer faster than the occasional sentence **fragment** or **fused sentence** (aka “run-on” sentence). Students should check their written work carefully and make sure that it is free of both fragments and fused sentences. In addition, students should make sure that their work carries a variety of sentences: **simple**, **compound**, **complex**, and **compound**-**complex** sentences should all be represented.

7.5.2 Paragraphing

Another aspect of good writing is paragraphing. To review, a strong paragraph is composed of a topic sentence (often the first sentence of the paragraph), three to six sentences expanding on that topic sentence and, when appropriate, a transitional sentence leading to the next paragraph. A good paragraph is four to seven sentences long and is *never* longer than ten sentences.

7.5.3 Source selection

The digital revolution of the past few decades has dramatically changed academic research. Today’s students simply do not carry out research the way that their teachers did when they were students. Therefore there is sometimes a gap between students and professors about what constitutes responsible research. “Just what *is* it that makes a ‘reliable’ source reliable?” is the topic of a long and detailed conversation that every student should have with her professor when embarking upon a research project. Despite the changes in research in the wake of the digital revolution, the essence of what constitutes a “good source” has not changed all that much. Good sources are timely, peer-reviewed, and written by experts in the field—that much is true whether a source appears in a paper-based or in an online-based journal. The MEDLINE database (available through Galileo) is a generally reliable locale to start most research projects in Nursing.

7.5.4 Responsible use of sources

Just finding quality sources is not enough to ensure success in Nursing writing assignments. Students also should use their sources responsibly. Responsible use of sources includes knowing the difference between quotation and paraphrase, using quotations judiciously, and understanding plagiarism.

A key part of using sources responsibly is understanding the difference between **quotation** and **paraphrase**. *Quotation* refers to a word-for-word repetition of *exactly* what appears in the original source. Quotations are set off from the remainder of the student writer's text by use of quotation marks and are cited parenthetically. A good *paraphrase* changes every (or almost every) word in the original passage as well as the original **syntax**. Although quotation marks are not used with paraphrases, they are cited parenthetically. Struggling students sometimes become over-reliant on quotation. Generally, no more than ten percent of a student's paper should be composed of quotations.

Students need to take the concept of plagiarism seriously, but at the same time they should not be so afraid of plagiarism that they cannot use sources effectively. Plagiarism literally means "an act of copying the ideas or words of another person without giving credit" ("Plagiarism") and, when the plagiarism is intentional and/or repeated, can carry punishment up to and including expulsion from the institution. But the plagiarism spectrum can also include such relatively minor infractions as failure to cite a particular statistic or submitting an incomplete list of references. Nursing faculty members are trained to recognize these various levels of plagiarism and are quick to differentiate between an offense that requires disciplinary action and a teachable moment. Additionally, students should be aware that the Nursing School at Gordon State College uses the Turnitin.com plagiarism detection service on a school-wide basis.

7.6 Writing in the Education program

Students in GSC's Education program may find themselves required to produce numerous written assignments including bibliographies and research papers. Many professors in the Education program adopt a process-based approach to student writing; that is, professors are not only interested in the finished product that a student submits but will also want to see evidence of the various steps (drafts, pre-writing activities, etc.) that lead to that finished product.

7.6.1 Bibliography

Students in the Education program may be assigned a large bibliography assignment that can require up to fifty sources. Students will need to both summarize and critique the works on the bibliography. Obviously understanding the difference between summary and critique is a key component of doing well on the assignment. In short,

"summary" refers to distilling the book's content into a couple of sentences or paragraphs; "critique" refers to looking critically and ranking the work's merits and faults.

7.6.2 Research paper

At the risk of stating the obvious, a good research paper is based on *research*, not the writer's opinion. Students should follow the directions carefully. They should collect strong sources—and it should be noted that many education professors do not accept general websites as sources—synthesize (that is, put together) what the sources say on a topic, and organize the paper in a logical, coherent, and organic manner. Additionally, many Education professors strongly encourage students to make use of the Student Success Center. Finally, ever-mindful of the way that teachers and would-be teachers need to model strong educational habits, Educations students should proofread their papers carefully before submitting the papers for evaluation.

7.8 Pitfalls to be avoided when writing in the Education program

There are a number of pitfalls students should try to avoid when writing in the Education program. Some of the pitfalls include failure to follow directions, failure to properly understand synthesis, poor organization, poor transitions, verbosity, and a lack of attention to grammar, mechanics, and usage.

7.8.1 The failure to follow directions pitfall

It has been said that one-half of life is simply following the directions. Although we could, perhaps, quibble with the exact percentage, it is undisputed that following directions is important. Yet good students often do poorly on easy assignments for precisely this reason—they have failed to follow directions. Why is this so? Perhaps over-confidence is part of the reason; the student, having read the directions early in the unit fails to read them again to double check. A good way to guard against this is to make sure to read the directions at least twice: once when the assignment is distributed and once again when the assignment has been completed, but before it has been submitted.

7.8.2 The synthesis pitfall

Some education professors have noted that the synthesis step trips up many students. Synthesis should not be confused with summary; nor should it be confused with analysis or critique. Synthesis is a putting together of disparate ideas. For example, if a student asked fifteen colleagues where the best place for lunch around campus was and six of them replied "Highlander Hall," four of them insisted that it was Subway, three suggested the pizza restaurant and one each liked the Chinese restaurant, and the Mexican restaurant, the student could synthesize that information and conclude that

Highlander Hall was a popular—but by no means unanimous—choice for lunch among Gordon students. Remember: synthesis is a putting together and it differs from both summary and analysis.

7.8.3 The organization pitfall

A second pitfall for Education students is the organization pitfall. Although professors can often be tolerant of a variety of organizational strategies, every paper should *have* an organizational strategy. New paragraphs should not come as a surprise to the reader; in fact, a paragraph should be placed in such a way that it cannot logically go anywhere else in the essay. There are many different organizational strategies: temporal—from the earliest to the most recent, from the general to the specific, from the specific to the general, from an argument's weakest reason to its best reason, but all essays need an organizational pattern

7.8.4 The transitions pitfall

Closely related to the organizational pitfall is the transitions pitfall. Most students know that every paragraph needs a **topic sentence**—a sentence that announces the purpose of the paragraph. But paragraphs also need transitional sentences—a way to guide the reader from the paragraph he or she is reading to the new paragraph. For example, in a paper touting the advantages of attending Gordon State one paragraph might be about its ample parking and the following paragraph might be about its new and modern student housing. A transitional sentence at the end of the first paragraph might say something like, "Of course, not every student is a commuter; for those who want to live on campus Gordon offers many attractive options."

7.8.5 The verbose pitfall

Education students should be careful not to confuse quantity with quality. More is not always better and students should not labor under the assumption that merely piling on more extraneous information will save a weak writing assignment. The best advice seems to be, "make your point; make it fully and then move on." Good Education writing is succinct.

7.8.6 The grammar mechanics and usage pitfall

Sometimes students writing in the Education program are surprised and disappointed to learn that poor grammar, mechanics, and/or usage habits can derail otherwise strong efforts in writing. It is important to remember that things like subject/verb agreement, proper comma usage, and appropriate tone are not just for English classes, but should stay with the student during his or her entire career. This is especially true for teacher candidates who will be looked on to model appropriate academic behavior.

7.8.7 Works cited

“Plagiarism” *Merriam-Webster Online.* Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 2 Aug. 2015.

“Succinct” Def. 2. *Merriam-Webster Online.* Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 31 July 2015.

8. Academic Honesty/Integrity

The subject of Academic Honesty/Integrity is addressed elsewhere in this textbook, but the subject warrants specific discussion in a chapter of its own. Included here in **Section 8** is a focused explanation of what the concept of academic honesty is and what it entails.

8.1 "Intellectual property"

A good analogy to use to understand academic honesty is to think of other people's ideas as a kind of *property*: just as you own *things* that you value and want to protect, people also have *ideas* they value and want to protect. The idea is that a person takes as much time and care into creating an idea as he or she takes in earning the money to purchase something. In going through this effort, the person is creating value – it becomes a valuable product.

> Effort increases value.

This analogy is not a perfect one, however, for a few important reasons. For one, very practical reason, intellectual property is not a physical thing that a person can control. We have laws to protect our rights to our own property, and with intellectual property, it is different because intellectual property is not something that a person can really see or lay hands on.

More than that, it is important to recognize that a person has rights not only to his or her ideas, but also to the way his or her ideas are *expressed*.

Another way intellectual property is not perfectly like physical property is in the way other people use it and the access they have to it. From this, it is important to understand that, with the free access and use of others' intellectual property comes the expectation that a person will use it responsibly.

8.2 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the result of taking the ideas in one context and presenting them in another context without properly or responsibly documenting it.

It is possible, in fact, for one to plagiarize him or herself. This can occur in many ways, but perhaps the most common occurs when the person uses material from a previous published work without citing it. This is considered self-plagiarism because (1) it leads an unsuspecting reader to believe that research was conducted in a different context than it really was, and (2) it misleads that reader into thinking that the information the author has self-plagiarized is all he or she has (or has ever had) to say on the subject.

It is very much like the rules for “palming” or playing zone defense in basketball: one is sloppy method, and the other is so difficult to defend that it has at times been prohibited because of the unfair advantage it gives over the team using it.

8.2.1 Intentional plagiarism

Plagiarism can occur for many reasons, one of which is that the writer knew that he or she was doing something academically dishonest, but made the decision to do it anyway.

8.2.2 Unintentional plagiarism

Unlike intentional plagiarism, it can occur that a writer can plagiarize unintentionally through poor documentation or poor understanding of how the rules of academic dishonesty really work.

Writers should understand that teachers make very little room for honest mistakes and have very little appreciation for pleas of ignorance. If the topic was covered in class – and really, this goes for any subject – then the student is responsible for understanding that topic, even if he or she was absent the day it was covered.

It is noted above in **Section 8.1** that “a person has the right not only to his or her ideas, but also to the way his or her ideas are expressed.” Notice the quotation marks placed around this definition. What this means is that writers who borrow others’ work have an obligation to their sources, not only to credit them for the ideas they have, but also to credit them for the words they use to express those ideas.

9.0 Tips for success in college

No-one *plans* to flunk out of college. And yet people—far too many of them—do so. Why is that? Although there is no one simple answer to that question nor is there one simple step that will guarantee success, by adhering to the following basic steps students can greatly increase their chances of graduating.

9.1 Actively attend class

Most people have heard the adage, “Fifty per cent of life is just showing up.” There is a great deal of truth to that saying: success without regular attendance is impossible. Hard and fast rules regarding attendance are difficult to come by, but most professors would agree that students who miss more than three sessions per semester *risk failing* their class *on attendance alone.*

However, to “actively attend class” means much more than being physically present. Students should arrive at class well rested, well-prepared and ready to learn. Sit in the first row if at all possible and stow electronic equipment (including cellular telephones) out of sight before class begins.

9.1.1 Be prepared for class

Being prepared for class means having the necessary materials, but it also means keeping up with the syllabus so the student knows what will be covered in that day’s meeting. Homework assignments from previous class meetings should be completed well before class begins and all readings should be completed. Notes from previous sessions should be reviewed before all class meetings.

9.1.2 Be alert

Good students arrive at class early having read their syllabus and knowing what is planned for that day. Students should sit as close to front center as possible and keep their eyes on the professor throughout the class meeting, taking careful notes as needed. The best way to avoid the temptation of distracting devices such as cellphones is to store them out of sight throughout the class meeting.

9.2 Study smarter

Despite its obsequious presence in movies and TV shows about college, the all-night cram session has been proved to be the *worst* way to study for a test. Instead, educators agree that students should review their notes for just five minutes every night beginning with the first class meeting and continuing all the way until the final exam. That way, they can succeed without the long sleepless night before the exam.

9.3 Take advantage of opportunities

Many unsuccessful academic careers could have been saved if students had just taken advantage of every opportunity they were given. For example, if a professor assigns a major project on October 7th, it is because he or she thinks it will take that students two months to complete the project successfully. Students can—and do—begin the project much later, but they do so at their peril. Another opportunity that students should tacould Begin projects early. Office hours are another great opportunity for students

and should be the first stop for any student who is struggling. Extra credit opportunities, when offered, should be seized upon whether or not the student thinks he or she will "need" the points: you never know. Forming study groups with two to four other like-minded students is also very beneficial.

9.4 Prioritize

Knowing how to prioritize is an important part of developing good academic habits. Knowing due dates, what percentage of final grades assignments are worth, and knowing what deserves painstaking attention and what can be done quickly are valuable tools for the GSC student.

9.5 The Gordon State College Student Success Center

Imagine if the GSC administration gathered a group of talented teachers, administrators, counselors, and students together and told that group to begin working on boosting graduation rates. Imagine if the administration built an attractive, bright and modern space for this group to work in. Imagine if they filled that attractive space with state-of-the-art computers. Imagine if the group began tutoring sessions, holding presentations and in general doing everything that they could think of to help our students. Of course, this place is not imaginary, it is real; it is the Gordon State College Student Success Center.

9.5.1 Location

The Student Success Center is centrally located on campus on the second floor of the Student Center, directly above the GSC bookstore.

9.5.2 Hours of operation

SSC hours can vary on a semester by semester basis, but typically the Center operates under two sets of hours. Tutoring is usually available from around 9AM to around 6PM M-Th. The Center is usually open a bit longer for computer work and for printing. See the SSC staff for this semester's hours.

9.5.3 Cost

All SSC services—tutoring, skill sessions, faculty presentations, and computer usage are free to Gordon State College students.

9.5.4 SSC computer lab

The SSC features some of Gordon State's newest, fastest, and most state-of-the art desktop computers as well as high speed printing. Note: SSC computers are designated for academic use only. Access to social media and other non-academic websites is restricted.

9.5.5 SSC tutoring: what happens

Tutoring in English and math is at the heart of the Student Success Center's work. Tutoring sessions feature student tutors and run anywhere from five to thirty minutes. Student tutors strictly abide by the principle that the "pen stays in the client's hand" that is, tutors will help students write for themselves, but the tutors will never write for the

student. Tutoring sessions can focus on any aspect of the writing process: grammar, mechanics, usage, thesis, organization, research, or getting started. Students using the Center's tutoring services are strongly encouraged to bring their professor's assignment sheet with them to the tutoring session.

9.5.6 SSC tutoring: what does not happen

Tutors will not write papers, proofread documents or research papers for students. Tutoring at the GSC SSC is an *active* process. It is not like hiring a private chef to cook for you; it's like going to cooking school yourself. Moreover, students should make plans to visit the SSC well before their deadline. There is very little tutors can do for a student who has a paper due in an hour.

9.5.7 Benefits of tutoring

Statistics indicated that students who make frequent and regular visits to the SSC pass their Area A classes at a substantially higher rate than those who do not visit the SSC.

9.5.8 Other SSC services: professor-hosted workshops

In addition to its tutoring work, the SSC sponsors frequent professor-hosted workshops on such disparate areas of interest as using Galileo, good study skills, time management and many more

9.5.9 Other SSC services: student-hosted workshops

The Gordon State College Student Success Center also host hands-on participatory workshops on such "meat and potatoes" issues as subject verb agreement, comma use, and MLA form. See the Center for this semester's schedule.

9.6 Working/writing against the clock: some strategies for timed writing assignments

9.6.1 The importance of defining terms

Just what is meant by "timed writing assignment"? The definition, "a writing project with a deadline" doesn't really tell the whole story. In fact, in the larger sense, *all* writing assignments are timed writing assignments—the semester itself is a time limit. For that matter the human life span itself is a deadline (no pun intended); we are allowed "x" number of years to writing something great and no more.

But for our purposes in this book, let us refer to timed writing assignments as academic composition projects where the student writer is limited to ½ hour, hour, or two hour period. Such assignments include college in-class essays, midterm examinations, and final examinations. These assignments provide their own special challenges for the writer.

9.6.2. Step one: forget everything

Well, maybe not *everything*. But in some ways, in-class timed writing assignments ask the student writer to re-think some of the most dearly-held principles of writing. For example, one thing that many writing teachers—including the authors of this book—strongly encourage is the practice of taking some time, say, twenty-four hours or so,

between the completion of the first draft and the beginning of the revision process. Obviously, that's not possible in a two-hour timed writing assignment. Use of the Student Success Center tutors is generally not going to be an option either. Depending on the assignment and the time allowed, substantial re-writing might not be possible either.

9.6.3 Timed writing assignments: before, during, and after

The special nature of timed writing assignments requires adjustment to the student-writer's plan of attack. Those adjustments should take place before, during, and after the timed writing assignment has been executed.

9.6.3.1 Adjustments made before the timed writing assignment

When approaching a timed writing assignment, the student writer should ask two questions:

-- 1) "Will I have access to the question before the writing period begins?"
-- 2) "Will I be writing an argumentative essay or an expository essay?"

9.6.3.2 Having access to the question before the writing period

Sometimes the professor will give the students the question a day or two before the in-class writing assignment; sometimes students will not see the question until the timed writing period begins. Being able to see the question in advance is undoubtedly an advantage –students can think carefully about the topic, do a little light research, and pre-write at their own pace. However, in some ways, access to the question in advance puts an onus on the student writer.

Think about it this way: if you have access to the question in advance, so do the other students. The professor is going to evaluate the essays with the idea in mind that the students had access to the question in advance. Therefore, such a professor is apt to hold students to a higher standard than the professor who withheld the examination question until class time. It is important to take advantage of the question and sketch out a few ideas in advance–your classmates (with whom you're in competition with, after all) are doing it, so you should too.

So, when having access to the question in advance, at the very minimum the student writer should complete a number of activities before the class meets. The student writer should develop a working thesis (complete with subtopics), have two salient examples for every subtopic, and have some idea of what the essay's conclusion will cover. The professor may (or may not) allow students to bring notes or source material into the examination room; students should also prepare accordingly. Blue books or notebook paper, if needed, should also be procured and set aside along with pens (at least two, blue or black ink) and a dictionary. It is usually a good idea to put this material together in a corner somewhere a two to three days in advance of the exam—the morning of the exam is NOT the time to be searching for an errant ballpoint pen.

9.6.3.3 No access to the question before the writing period

When the student writer is *not* given access to the examination question in advance, there is still plenty to do. In fact, there's arguably *more* work to do when access to the question is withheld. The first thing a student should do in that case is to ask the professor whether or not the professor allows students access to previous semester's exam questions. Many professors save exam questions (or "prompts" as they are sometimes known) and will allow students access to the prompts—usually in the professor's office and during regularly scheduled office hours. By examining a number of old prompts, the student-writer will get a strong idea of what to expect when the examination time arrives.

If accessing old prompts is not possible, the student writer should sit down and ask his or herself a series of questions like, "If I were the professor, what would *I* ask on the final examination?" "What has been important to the professor?" "What has been mentioned more than once during the semester?" "What did the professor say about the subject on the very first day of class?" (Some professors love to "bookend" the semester by referring back to something that was mentioned on the very first day of classes.)

9.6.3.4 Argumentative timed writing essays

After determining whether or not the student writer will have access to the prompt before the writing period begins is to determine whether the essay prompt directs the student to write an argumentative essay or an expository essay. Many worthwhile academic efforts have been torpedoed by argument essays being mistaken for expository essays or expository essays being mistaken for argumentative essays. The difference can sometime be subtle, but it is always present: an argumentative essay seeks to change the mind of one who feels differently; expository essays merely present information in an unbiased may. To use the daily newspaper as a metaphor, an expository piece would be in the "news" section and an argumentative piece would more likely be found in the "opinion" or "editorial" section. It is important to realize that the identical topic can yield two very different essays and a good expository essay is likely to be a very poor argumentative essay. All too often students argue when they are not expected to and fail to argue when they are expected to do so.

An argumentative essay seeks to change the reader's mind about an issue. Usually an argument needs a claim. The claim is what you want and is often expressed as a sentence that begins with "We should….". Then use reasons and evidence to convince the reader of the validity of your claim. Reasons should reflect the audience's values. Evidence, on the other hand, should be sufficient, credible, and accurate. Also: a good argument usually anticipates counter-arguments and refutes them.

As an example, imagine trying to convince a friend that the friend should become a public elementary school teacher. The writer would collect all of the best things about being an elementary school teacher: e.g., it is important work, it is fairly secure, it allows for ample time off, etc.

9.6.3.5 Expository timed writing essays

In an expository essay, the writer is not asked to take a side; in fact, the writer *should not* take a side in the issue at all. The writer should simply gather all relevant information and present it to the reader in an unbiased way so that the reader is capable of making the best possible decision. The writer's biases, if any, should be hidden so well that the reader should have no idea how the writer feels about the subject. The writer of an expository essay should also take pains to present all aspects of the question –both good and bad. So the writer of an expository essay on being an elementary school teacher would present all the positive aspects of teaching, and also all the negative aspects: e.g., students are often underprepared, parents tend to blame teachers for their students low grades, many schools are under-funded, etc. The writer of an expository essay on teaching would need to present *both* sides of the issue, not only the advantages to teaching, but the disadvantages as well.

9.7 Sets of Words You Just Might Be Mixing Up

affect and effect

We tend to use these words interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. In most cases *affect* is a **verb**, as in the sentence, "Sad movies *affect* me deeply." *Effect* is usually a **noun**, as in the sentence, "The drug has a side *effect* associated with it."

accept and except

To *accept* is a **verb** and it means to receive or to take. *Except* is a **preposition** meaning "not including." So, for example, a testy hot dog vendor might say, "I *accept* [verb with an 'a'] all US currency; except [**preposition** with an 'e'] for big bills, and wheat pennies."

allusion and illusion

To make an *allusion* is to refer back to something, often to a cultural product like a book or a movie. If someone grumbled in an Irish-accent, "you're a wizard, Harry; and a thumpin' good one, I'd wager," that person is make an *allusion* to the *Harry Potter* series. If that same person seems to pull a rabbit out of a hat, he is making an *illusion.*

bemused and amused

Although some might think that *bemuse* is similar to *amuse*, the words are actually quite different. Most are comfortable with the definition of *amused*: it means to be entertained or to smile. But to be *bemused* is to be puzzled, or bewildered. Although a student might be *bemused* by a Calculus test, he or she would probably not find such a test *amusing.*

breathe and breath

Breathe (*with* an 'e') is a **verb**; *breath* (no e) is a **noun**. So we might say, "Donna breathed [past tense **verb**] deeply. She took a deep breath [**noun**]."

capitol and capital

The words are both **nouns**, but a *capitol* [with an 'o'] is a building; a *capital* [with an 'a'] is a city. A person could write, "Our capitol [the US Capitol building] is in our capital [Washington, DC]."

complimentary and complementary

This one is a tiny bit trickier as *complimentary* is an **adjective** with two definitions. It can mean "to give praise," as in, "Susan liked my new tie; she was quite *complimentary*." Or, it can mean "to be given free of charge," as in, "We got *complimentary* tickets to the Motörhead show since my uncle is Lemmy's podiatrist." *Complementary* refers to something that works well with something else, as in, "Notice how the bass line is *complementary* to the guitar solo in this song."

converse and conversate

This one is easy: to *converse* means to talk with someone. To *conversate* is a recently made-up word that has no recognized meaning in Standard Academic English. Simply avoid using "*conversate*" and use *converse* in its place.

e.g, and i.e.

We can thank English's Latin roots for this pair of confusing words. *E.g.* means "for example," and i.e., means, "that is." A writer could state, "Look at any state in the Mid-Atlantic region; *e.g.*, [for example] Maryland." Similarly, another writer might state, "I found what I needed to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, *i.e.*, [*that is*] peanut butter, bread, jelly, and a knife."

eminent and imminent
To be *eminent* is an adjective meaning famous and well-respected. *Imminent* is an **adjective** meaning about to take place. For example, if the famous astronomer Neil deGrasse Tyson was scheduled to speak at 7:30 PM and it was 7:25 PM, we could say that the talk by the *eminent* astronomer was *imminent.*

farther and further
Both words are **adverbs**, but they are used in different ways. In most cases *farther* refers to distance and *further* refers to time. A person might live "*farther* down the road," but he or she might refer to the elementary school years as "*further* back in time."

fewer and less
To understand the difference *fewer* and *less* the concept of **count nouns** must be understood. Not surprisingly, a **count noun** is a noun that can be counted: concrete things like people, trucks, and Phillips-head screws. **Non-count nouns** are abstract things that cannot be counted: honor, love, fun. With that in mind, *fewer* is used solely for **count nouns** and *less* is used solely for **non-count nouns**.[1]

flaunt and flout
To *flaunt* is to show something off in an obvious way as to draw attention to it. For example, if an athlete is awarded a championship ring and he constantly waves his hand as to draw attention to the ring, he could be said to be *flaunting* the ring. To *flout* something is to boldly ignore a rule or law. If students light cigarettes right under a blue "No Smoking" sign, then they could be said to be *flouting* Gordon's no smoking policy.

imply and infer
The difference between these two verbs is simple: *implying* is done by the speaker; *inferring* is done by the listener. For example, if one roommate notes, "That's your third dessert tonight," the dessert lover could reply, "Are you *implying* I eat too many sweets?" The speaker could then retort, "No, I think you are *inferring* too much from my statement."

its and it's
Its [no apostrophe] is an adjective meaning "belonging or relating to a certain thing." *It's* is a **contraction** for "it is." Therefore, we could state, "It's [**contraction** meaning 'it is'] true that the dog broke *its* [the leg belonging to the dog] leg."

[1] That means that the signs at the quick checkout lanes of most grocery stores are, in fact, wrong: they should read "ten items or fewer" since "items" can be counted. Feel free to bring that up the next time you visit the Barnesville Ingles.

lay and lie
Arguably the toughest pair of words to keep straight, correct usage of *lay* and *lie* depends on what **verb tense** is being used. In the **present tense** it is important to remember that *lay* is a **transitive verb**, so it needs an object. Therefore, we would write: I *lay* the book on the desk. *Lie* is an **intransitive verb**[2], so it cannot take an **object**. Therefore, we would write: "I feel woozy; I need to *lie* on the bed."[3]

As complicated as *lay* and *lie* are in the **present tense**, unfortunately it gets even more confusing when we move to the **past tense**. The **past tense** of *lie* is actually *lay*, so even though "I *lie* in bed" is correct in the **present tense**, in the past we would have to make it "As I *lay* in bed earlier this morning…" The past tense of lay is *laid*: for example, "When Dr. Venus *laid* down my second draft, I could tell by his smile it was better.

The **past participle tense** does not make things any easier. The **past participle** of *lay* is *lain*. One could write, "Crumpet the cat has *lain* in the kitchen's sunniest spot for over two hours." The **past participle** of *lie* is *lay* (just like it is in the **past tense**) so we would write, "She had *lay* in bed since the accident."

literally and figuratively
If a writer uses *literally,* he or she should do a quick double check and ask, "did this *actually* happen; or am I exaggerating?" This is because *literally* means *actually*. If a person states, "When I heard that they broke up my head *literally* exploded," that person is either using the word incorrectly or dead. *Figuratively* means "emblematically" or "metaphorically;" in other words, *not literally*.[4]

me, myself, and I
As Beyonce taught us, this trio of words all mean the same thing. However, they function in radically different ways in a sentence. *I* is always a **subject**: in the sentence "I went to the movies." *Me* is a pronoun and it always forms an **object** as in "she's with me." *Myself* is an **objective pronoun** and its use is limited to the writer or the speaker referring to his own person as in, "with all the increases in college fees, I do not have enough money to feed and clothe *myself*."

principle and principal
Principal is an **adjective** meaning "most important." With that in mind it is easy to see how the term became associated with a school's boss –the *principal* is the most important educator on a high school campus. *Principle* with an 'e' is a **noun** meaning

[2] Of course, *lie* can also mean "to tell an untruth," but let us put that aside for now.
[3] Even if you struggle with *lie* and *lay* you are in good company. Grammatically, Eric Clapton's song "Lay Down Sally" means that he wants someone to pick Sally up and put her down somewhere—probably not what he meant. Similarly, Bob Dylan's "Lay Lady, Lay" should be "Lie Lady, Lie."

[4] It should be noted that this definition of *literally* seems to be in the process of changing. A recent version of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* lists a secondary definition of *literally* as "in effect," or, "virtually." However, formal academic English should keep to the original definition for the foreseeable future. In academic writing, it is almost always better to adopt the "old fashioned" approach.

"moral or ethical rule". Therefore one could have a *principal principle*—say, treating all with respect and kindness.

set and sit
Standard usage of *Set* and *sit*, like *that* and *who*, differentiates between human beings and objects. People *sit* (an **intransitive verb)**; objects are *set* (a **transitive verb**). Although you might hear, "I am going to *set* myself down and read the paper," that construction is actually a non-standard one and should be avoided while writing in Standard Academic English. Since *set* is a **transitive verb**, it has to have an **object**: "I *set* my coffee cup on the table."

than and then
Than is a **conjunction** used to show a relationship between two other **nouns** as in the sentence, "Steve is taller than Marty." *Then* is an **adverb** meaning "at that time" or is used to describe what happened next. For example, "The 1980s were an interesting time; *then* a portable phone was as big as a shoe box." *Then* came the 1990s, with less expensive and more powerful cell phones."

that and which
The problem with these two pronouns is not so much their meaning, but when to use them. *That* should be used in independent clauses. *Which* is parenthetical—the sentence could exist just fine without it.

that and who
That is only used for things; *who* is only used for people. This can be tricky because in informal contexts, we use *that* for people all the time. But in Standard Academic English we should write, "Are you the person *who* (not "*that"*) sits behind me in Western Civilization?"

their, there, and they're
There is an adjective meaning, "of or relating to certain people." We could say, "Atlanta residents love *their* Falcons." *There* is an **adverb** meaning, "at that location." If we were standing across the street from the Georgia Dome, we could say, "The Falcons play over *there*." They're is a **contraction** of two words: *they* and *are* as in "*They're* going to win the NFC South this year."

too, to, and two
Too is an adverb meaning "to an excessive degree" as "the music was *too* loud for me." *To* is a preposition used to indicate direction or location as, "We drove *to* my house." Two is an adjective representing the second as, "I have *two* part-time jobs."
We can even use all three of them in the same sentence: "By *two* o'clock [the hour after one] in the morning Steve was *too* drunk [that is, excessively drunk] *to* [where? home] drive home.

your and you're

Your is an **adjective** meaning “of or relating to you.” You’re is a **contraction** of two words: *you* and *are*. We might ask, “Is that *your* car?” meaning, “is that the car that belongs to you?” Similarly, we might state, “So *you’re* [meaning *you are*] a SUV owner.” One way to avoid confusion when using these tricky words is to take the contraction out the equation and think of *you’re* as *you are*.

9.8 Paper Space Wasting Words and Phrases that Add Nothing to Your Writing (So You Should Probably Stop Using Them)

Sometimes student writers are so intimidated by minimum length requirements in essays ("Oh my goodness, how am I *ever* going to think of *one thousand words!*) that they, perhaps subconsciously, try to "fatten up" their prose by using three words when one will suffice or using phrases that don't add anything of merit to the writing. Below are some of the most common examples of Paper Wasters from the last couple of years of Gordon State English essays.

"all things considered . . ."
As the name of a National Public Radio news program, "All Things Considered" is just fine. In a student essay, it seems to be just a slightly more long-winded version of "in conclusion . . ." and could easily be shortened to "in conclusion" or simply eliminated altogether. After all, it should be obvious that the essay has reached its conclusion.

"at this point in time" (or "at the present time," or "at this moment in time")
For starters, these phrases are redundant (what is the difference between "at this time" and "at this point in time"?). But even the shorter "at this time" is rarely needed as the reader of a student essay that was composed earlier that semester is not likely to think that the writer is referring to some distant past.

"at the end of the day…"
This phrase is a bit too casual for formal academic writing, but even its more formal cousin, "in conclusion" is usually not needed. The reader should be able to see he or she has reached the conclusion of the essay.

"each and every…"
Since "each" and "every" are synonyms, using "*each and every*," rather than "each" or "every" alone is a waste of paper space. Such usage is tantamount to writing "every and every."

"having said that…."
This is a meaningless transition. Think about it this way: you have just "said" that (or, perhaps, *written* that); reminding your reader that you have written what you've already written is a colossal waste of time and paper space.

"I, personally, . . . "
There is no difference between "I like country music," and "*I, personally*, like country music" so "personally" can always be cut.

"in today's society…"
Readers will assume that the writer is talking about twenty-first century America unless the writer states otherwise. "In today's society…" does little other than burn precious paper space.

"in my personal opinion"
Opinions *are* personal. There is no such thing as a "civic opinion" or a "corporate opinion." Therefore, "*personal opinion*" is redundant: "in my opinion" works fine.

"it is to be thought…"
A needlessly wordy and passive way of saying, "I think," "it is to be thought" demonstrates the tortuous things writers are willing to do to avoid the first-person personal pronoun.

"it is what it is"
This tautology has infected our language very quickly within the last few years. Like *like*, or *y'know?* the phrase *it is what it is* really has no meaning and serves no purpose except to fill space. One might respond: of course *it is what it is*; how could it be what it is *not*? It is probably best to leave this phrase out of formal academic writing.

"just sayin'"
Although this space waster is much more common in informal spoken English, it is beginning to infect formal academic writing as well. Like others on this list, it simply restates what should be obvious to a reader and contributes nothing of value to the writing.

"let me begin by saying…"
If the writer begins, does he or she have to inform the reader the essay is beginning? Can the essay just begin?

"on this planet of ours…"
Like many of the paper-wasters on this list, this one is obvious if we think about it from the reader's perspective. Since there is little or no chance that the reader thinks you are writing about life on Neptune or Pluto, reminding the reader that we are talking about Earth is pointless.

"thanks in advance…"
Written after asking the reader for a favor, "thanks in advance" is not only paper-wasting, but seems to take the ability to say "no" away from the recipient.

"to begin with…" (and its cousin, "in conclusion,")
Like others on this list, the phrase "to begin with" demonstrates a lack of audience awareness. If a paragraph is on the first page and at the top of a writer's essay, it's pretty obvious that it is situated in the beginning. In short, the reader knows the writer is beginning; there is no need to re-inform the reader of that fact. Similarly, the last

paragraph is (or should be) the conclusion and there is often little need to restate the obvious.

“totally”

Oh, Moon Unit Zappa, the troubles that you have caused. The problem with *totally*—as with many others on this list—is that it does not add anything to the sentence. Consider this: what is the difference between “I *totally* got an “A” on my American Literature quiz.” And “I got an “A” on my American Literature quiz.” If there is no difference, then the word adds nothing and can be eliminated.

“we, as human beings”

In addition to sounding a little pompous, this is obvious. Yes, we are human beings. We are not muskrats or doggie chew toys or number two pencils with bite marks. But since the reader knows (or at least suspects) that we are human beings, reminding them of the fact is superfluous.

“with all due respect…”

This phrase serves little purpose even when the writer *has* respect for the person being addressed. But an even bigger problem might be this: it is usually used just before showing a total *lack* of respect to the reader. Consider the sentence: “With all due respect, Dr. Provolone, you’re an idiot.” In that sentence the writer clearly has NO respect for poor Dr. Provolone; after all, the writer just called him an idiot. If writers wish to demonstrate respect, they can certainly do so. But feigning respect and then immediately showing contempt seems a bit twisted—as well as wasting precious paper space.

9.9 Words or Phrases That You're Probably Using Incorrectly:

awesome
What You Think it Means: good, great
What it Actually Means: to be struck with awe[5]

could care less
What You Think it Means: you don't care
What it Actually Means: you do care[6]

bemuse
What You Think it Means: amuse
What it Actually Means: examine doubtingly

irregardless
What You Think it Means: without regard
What it Actually Means: without without regard, so *with* regard

hoi polloi
What You Think it Means: rich and powerful people
What it Actually Means: common and ordinary people

irony
What You Think it Means: coincidence
What it Actually Means: *Irony* refers to at least two different things: verbal irony and situational irony. Verbal irony refers to a tension between a word's dictionary definition and the way it is being used—not unlike sarcasm. Situational irony is when the actual result is drastically different from what is expected.[7]

like[8]
What You Think it Means: "said" or, "I am just filling space while I think of the next thing I wish to say."
What it Actually Means: "as" or "fond of"

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[5] So, for example, French fries might be delicious, but they are *not* awesome as no one is "awed" by French fries. Think of it this way: people, if they are very lucky, probably have two or three "awesome" experiences in their lives—e.g., meeting the love of their life, childbirth, seeing the Grand Canyon, etc..

[6] If you "could care *less*," there must be some amount of caring that is already going on, right?

[7] Misunderstanding the term *ironic* has even made it into the pop music charts. The lyrics to Alanis Morissette's 1995 song, "Ironic" make it clear that the Canadian singer-songwriter has little idea what *irony* means.

[8] Overuse and/or incorrect use of the word *like* tends to be much more prevalent in spoken English than it is in written English. Still, its use and misuse should be monitored.

literally
What You Think it Means: figuratively
What it Actually Means: that the action in question actually happened[9]

penultimate
What You Think it Means: the last one, the final, the grand finale
What it Actually Means: the second to the last one. So the "penultimate" quarter of a basketball game is the third, not the fourth.

unique
What You Think it Means: kind of special
What it Actually Means: one of a kind[10]

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[9] So if a friend states, "I died; I literally *died* when he asked me to the dance," she has apparently come back from the dead and is a zombie. Activate zombie protocols immediately.

[10] One way to remember *unique* is this: you are unique. Those pants you bought at Old Navy are not unique –they made thousands of them.

9.10 Exercises

9.10.1 Exercises for 9.8

Using what you learned about paper space wasting words from section 9.2, make the appropriate cuts in the paragraph below.

Let me begin by saying that I, personally, see no reason why we should have to complete an exercise on wordiness for this class at this particular point in time. With all due respect to the textbook authors, each and every assignment in this section is stupid. To begin with, in today's society writers use words very carefully and never let excess wordiness choke the document that they are working on. We, as human beings. know that words matter and all things considered, you are just making your essay hard to read when you include any and all extras. Having said that, anyone and everyone knows that sometimes essays are too wordy. But, at the end of the day, with all things considered it's not that big of a problem in my personal opinion. .

9.10.2 Exercise for 9.9

Using what you have learned about these words from section 9.3, place a check mark next to the sentences that use the bold-faced word correctly. Place an "X" by sentences that use the bold-faced word incorrectly.

1. He said, he was going to break up with me. I said, "**I could care less**;" you're a really crummy boyfriend anyway.

2. I'm a junior here at Gordon State, so this is my **penultimate** year.

3. Fig Newtons are very **unique** cookies.

4. I don't find Louis CK funny at all; I'm just like, dude, what's up with you? I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't find him **amusing**; I just find him **bemusing**.

5. Our senior prank wasn't **awesome** but our senior trip was: we went to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. All the fish really took my breath away.

6. It was **ironic** to see Dr. King in line at the bank today.

9.10.3 Exercise for 9.7

Using what you learned about tricky words from section 9.7 circle the word that best completes the sentence for each of the following below.

1. Hold on, I have too much in my hands; I need to **[set/sit]** some of this stuff on the counter.

2. A side **[affect/effect]** of high gas prices is **[fewer/less]** traffic.

3. There is definitely **[fewer/less]** traffic these days; you see **[fewer/less]** cars on the road.

4. **[It's/Its]** true what you have heard; my cat broke **[it's/its]** leg

5. Criminology 901 is the class **[that/which]** I want to take.

6. Dr. Sam Spade is the professor **[that/who]** teaches Criminology.

7. You don't look so good; you better **[lie/lay]** down.

8. Charlie sent me this really weird email that left me feeling **[bemused/amused]**, so I went home and watched two hours of *Family Guy* until I felt **[bemused/amused].**

9. **[Your/You're]** asking me to do something that is unethical. I cannot take **[your/you're]** midterm for you!

9. He only reads books by women **[e.g./i.e.],** Jane Austen. Also, he only orders appetizers when he eats out **[e.g./i.e.],** he never orders an entrée or dessert.

11. "Family first" is the one guiding **[principal/principle]** I try to live by.

12. By saying, ". . . if you can ever manage to put that iPhone down" , he **[implied/inferred]** that I spent too long texting.

13. She brazenly **[flaunts/flouts]** convention by coming to school in a ballet skirt, swim fins, and a football helmet.

14. Dr. Wilcox said she could **[accept/except]** my paper even though it was a day late. I have it all prepared **[accept/except]** for the Works Cited page.

15. Katie is standing over **[there/they're/their].** Those people with her? **[They're/their/there]** her parents. Yes, that 2015 Honda is **[their/they're/there]** car.

16. Georgia's **[capitol/capital]** is Atlanta; the **[capitol/capital]** building has a bright golden dome.

17. Six ounces of Tabasco sauce is way **[to/too/two]** much for the chili. The recipe says **[to/too/two]** use no more than **[to/too/two]** ounces.

18. After having run up all four flights of steps in the IC, I was a little out of **[breathe/breath].**

19. The moon does not really disappear from the sky during an eclipse; that's just an **[allusion/illusion].**

20. Which town is **[further/farther]** from campus: Thomaston or Griffin?

21. Bill Gates should give some of his money to **[me/myself/I]**. **[Me/Myself/I]** think that I would spend it all on **[me/myself/I]**.

22. I am so hungry that I could **[literally/figuratively]** eat the entire contents of Ingles in one **[sitting/setting].**

23. You and I need to talk soon. Let's **[converse/conversate]** before Chemistry.

24. The test is scheduled for tomorrow; it's **[imminent/eminent].**

25. First there were a lot of books about vampires, **[then/than]** there were a lot of books about zombies. What's next?

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